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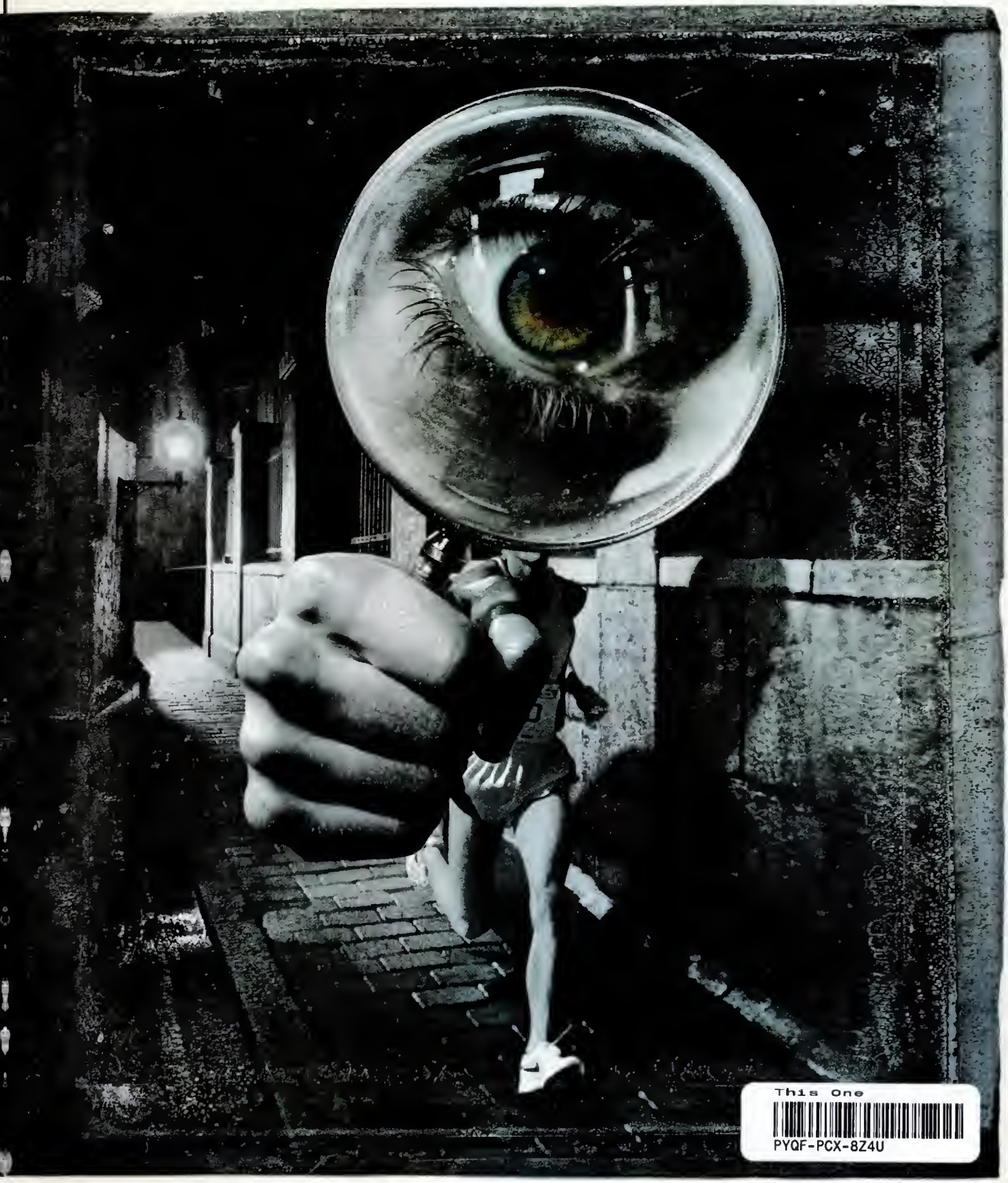
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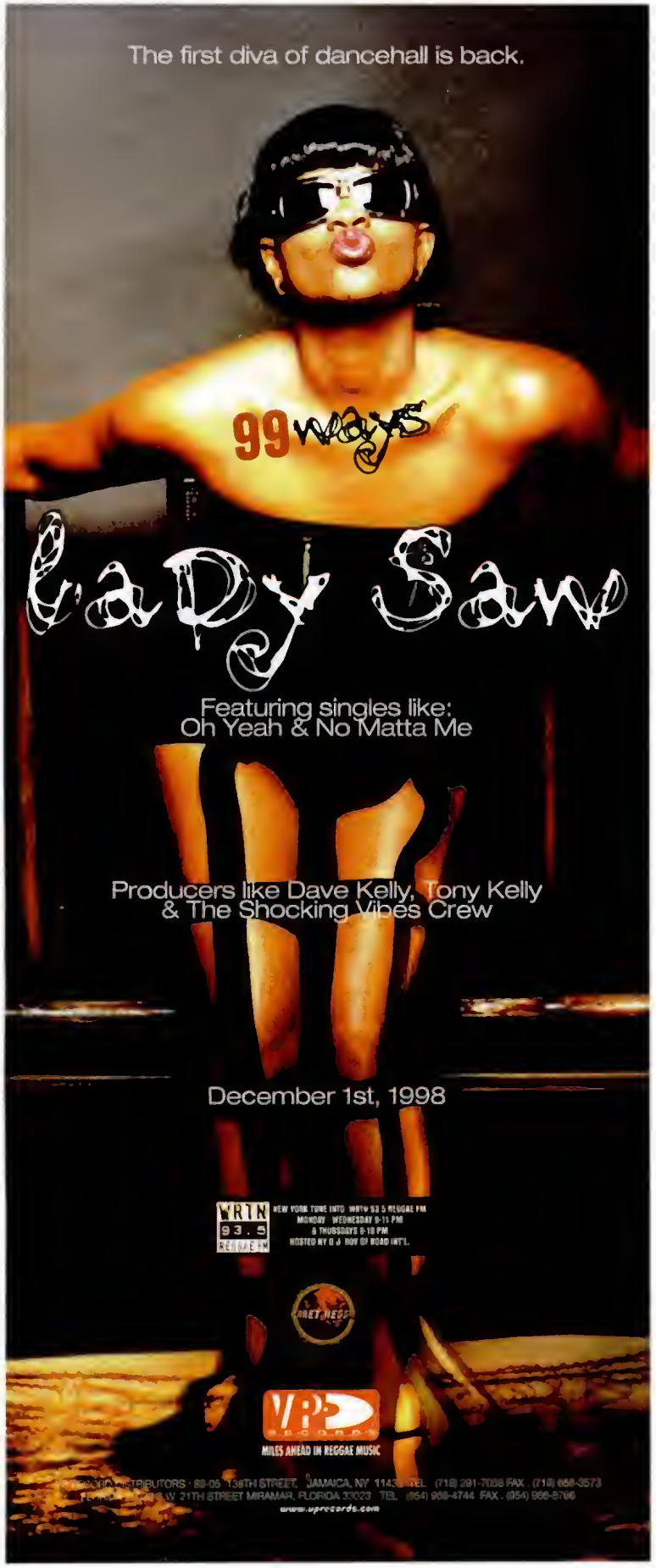
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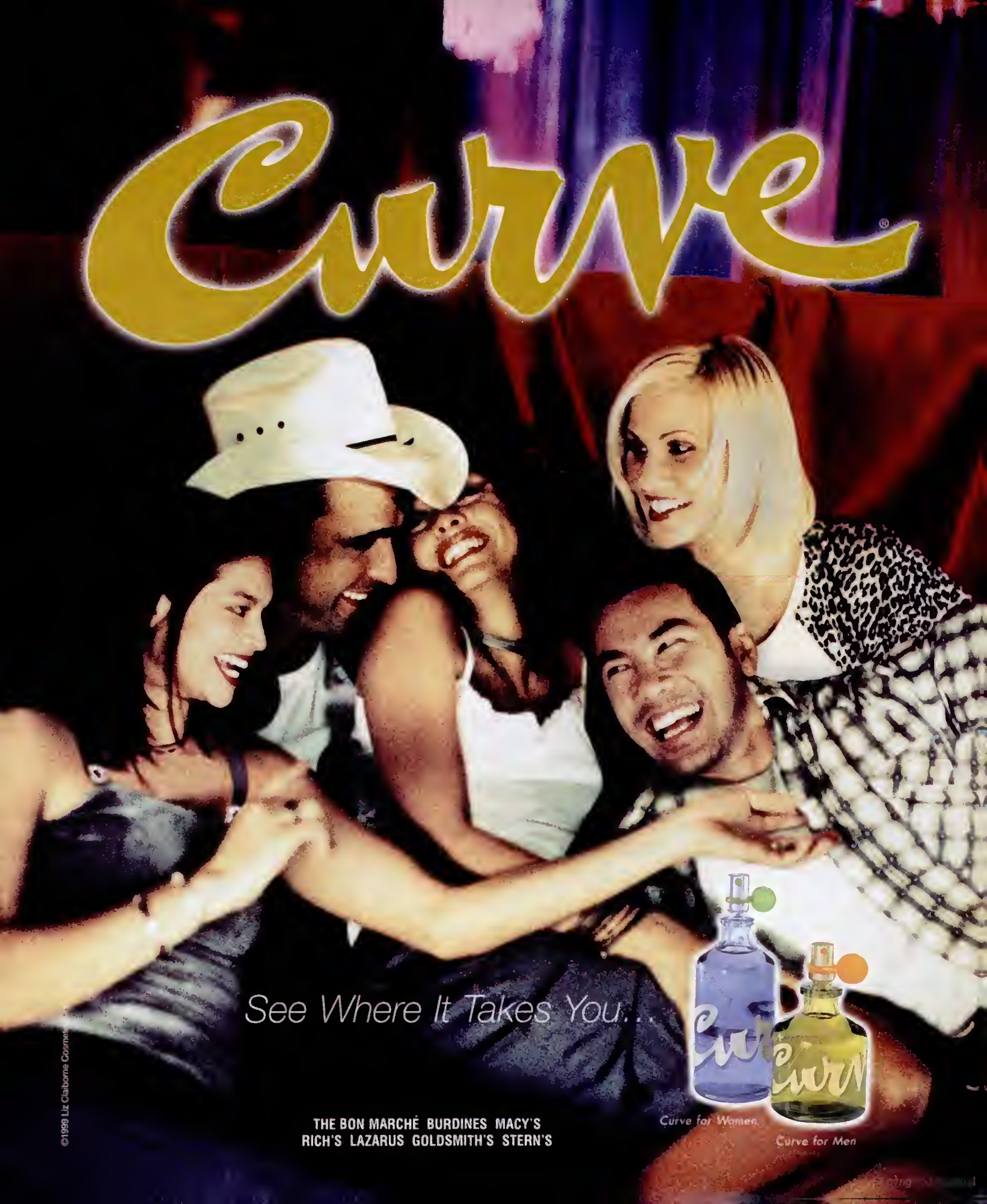
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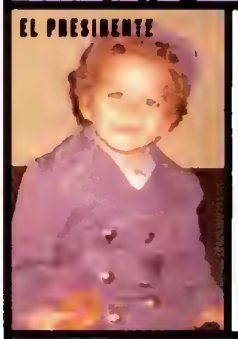

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THE GUEST LIST



"Rap'll set you free," says a wisecrackin' **Elliott Wilson.** Ha should know. E-Dub's been writing about hip hop for six years. "Rap makes you feel lika *you* can perform," he says. That's why niggas are rhymin' on the corner, imitating Jay-Z." This former *Source* Music Editor can't rhyme, so he's rep'ing for veteran hip hop scribes—questioning RZA (page 90) and Memphis Bleek (Next, page 58), then critiquing hip hop's old school (Start, page 32), L.L. Cool J's "I Need Love" (page 72), and Busta Rhymes's new disc (Revolutions, page 135). He's so good we might nominata Elliott for presidant.

World-ranowned aarosol artist **Vulcan** hits off journalism's planet this month with a trua tale of New York City motorbike legend Wink and his crotch-rocket assassins ("Wheels of Steel," paga 98). Their insane wheelies and burnouts "look like break-dancing...on motorcycles," he says. "It's a battla, and if tha naxt kid can top you, tha battla's over." Vulcan, who's Wink's former mantor, has won some bike battles in his time. But now V prefers to get his props from street painting and documenting his adventures for graffiti magazines lika tha *International Get-Hip Times.*



DAVID SCHMIDLAP



Player: Walter Smith, N.Y.C. lansologist
X-Challanga: Filming sports-bika duda Wink for "Wheels of Steel," page 98). "I rocked out with him," Walt says of his bananas rida. Ha was hangin' from a van racin' down the highway, shooting Wink actin' out. "When I get amped, physical safety goes out tha window."
Extreme Sports: "Sitting in my littla yard with my wife, having a beer, walking tha dog. Totally mind-numbing stuff."
Lass Extrame: Making "stupid little thrillars" for childhood venture Shed-house Brothers Films. Now he's capturing drama for *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Nika*.

Piotr Sikora's life is *real*. "I ran two crackhouses by tha tima I was 18," says the hype lansman of his formar hustla. But after too many trips to Riker's Island, he got positive. Piotr's credits include his hot cover story flicks for "Heart Doctors" (page 80) and "Oh Mya!"(page 86). "Everybody was giving love," he says of tha shoot's spiritual vibe, which P believes is vital to his art. When P's not making ethereal magic as VIBE's naw photographer-at-large, shooting covers like those of Master P (May '98) and Snoop (October '98), he's bumpin' DMX while rollin' through BK's Southsida, where ha lives with his wife and fam.



IN-HOUSE COUNSEL

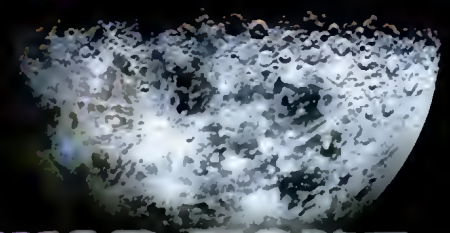


Assistant Music Editor **Shani Saxon** once jumped rope whila B-boys body rocked to phat beats from boomboxes. "Hip hop's crucial to my life," sha says, "and I knew that at a magazine, I could combine my two loves—music and reading." In '96, she joined VIBE as editorial assistant and has sinca become a bona fida wordsmith. This month alone she finessed tha "19 Singles of 1998/99 Love Songs of All Time" (paga 63) and much of tha Ravolutions section. She also edited the Mr. Vegas piece (page 57) for Next, which Shani takes ovar next month. How to decide who's "next"? "Listen to what underground DJs are spinning at clubs in New York, where things usually start bubbling." That's Shani Shan—ill communicator.


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word is bond

"I wished I'd explained to him 'Super Freak' was just a song I wrote. It made some money. It got me famous. But it didn't really entitle [anyone] to handle my butt. There are no men's hands on my butt. That's a no-no."

—Rick James on *Judge Joe Brown*, arguing his case against former pal Geronne "J.T." Turner, who grabbed James's butt at a bar

"Nikki's [breasts] are real and they're still spectacular.... We could identify her nipples in a lineup."

—*Pop-Up Video* cocreator Tad Low on supermodel Nikki Taylor's ta tas, which he observed while researching his new book, *The Truth About Sex* (*New York Post*)

"Graze on my lips; and if those hills be dry / Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie."

—William Shakespeare, from his epic poem "Venus and Adonis"

"I don't know if I would have the guts to walk around with that butt.... Is it cultural, or what was she given in self-confidence that I wasn't?"

—Cindy Crawford on Jennifer Lopez's gluteus maximus (*Self*)

"I fucking, like, lived in that shadow and I'm alive and I'm going to live and I'm going to have great romances that are more than that was."

—Courtney Love on her desire to move on since Kurt Cobain's death (*The Face*)

editor's choice

"Bring your weapons / To my sword and shield / But what's the higher level / If your shit ain't real?"

—X-Clan, from 1990's "Grand Verbalizer, What Time Is It?" (4th & B'way/Island)

from the VIBE vault

FEBRUARY 1998

"The quartet swing with a rare cathartic daring. Plus, their dance steps are *fly*."

—VIBE Editor-in-Chief Danyel Smith on Dru Hill

AUGUST 1998

"I'm sassy, but not sleazy. I don't have to be giving head to anybody to be sexy."

—Mya on her style

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The Independent (UK)



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MAIL



Honestly, when I opened my mailbox and saw Mariah Carey on your cover I was angry. I've always disliked her because she wouldn't publicly admit she was black. I would tell people she was black and no one would believe me. So I boycotted everything she did—videos, CDs, and TV specials. Finally she's come out in VIBE. I love it. Now I see a new Mariah. Mariah, thank you for being true to your self.

Knicole L. Mitchell
Alexandria, VA

SWEETHEART

When I read your Mariah Carey interview, I felt like I was at a sleepover with an old friend ["Higher and Higher," by Danyel Smith, November]. I love Mariah Carey's a bombshell. I never thought I'd see the day that anyone could top VIBE's hot Toni Braxton cover, but Mariah's done it *easily*. This onetime pop princess is now a bona fide R&B diva. My respect and admiration for her are renewed. Mariah, you go!

Stephen Lee Roldan
Aiea, HI

"I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY THAT ANYONE COULD TOP *VIBE*'S HOT TONI BRAXTON COVER, BUT MARIAH'S DONE IT *EASILY*."

Mariah! I never used to like her because when she was younger she seemed condescending and snobbish. Now Mariah's grown into her skin—and I've found a soul sister.

Jennifer Hopkins
Newark, DE

I liked Mariah Carey when she was sweet and innocent. Now that she's turned into a half-naked ho, I can't stand her! She's become an in-your-face sex symbol just to fit in. In the interview she says she's only been with two men—Tommy and Derek. Well, you sure couldn't tell by looking at one of her videos—she has practically nothing on and is shaking her ass in damn near every rapper's face. I mean, just look at what she's wearing on the cover. I wish she'd go back to being herself. She's not fooling me at all.

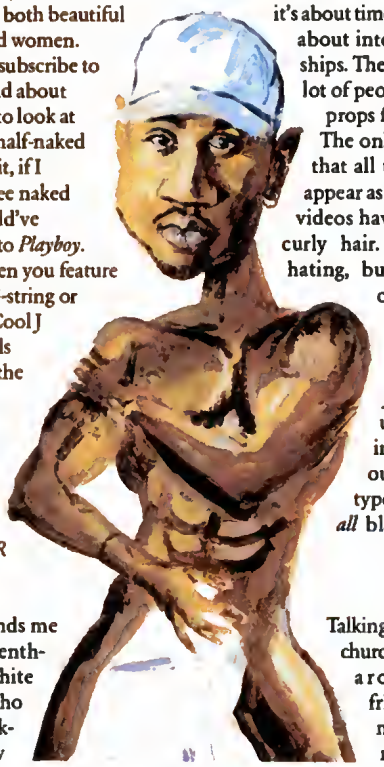
Jasmin Dysard
Brooklyn, NY

If Mariah Carey doesn't have a man, she should wait, kick back, have fun, and let men come to *her*. That baseball-playing boyfriend she had wasn't ready for a real relationship. If it was me, I'd hold her in my arms and ease her fears away. Then hopefully she'd tell me I'm her sweetheart.

Frank Ramirez
Homeland, CA

Mariah Carey and Toni Braxton are both beautiful and talented women. However, I subscribe to VIBE to read about music, not to look at pictures of half-naked women. Shit, if I wanted to see naked hoes, I would've subscribed to *Playboy*. Perhaps when you feature Mase in a G-string or show L.L. Cool J with his balls blowing in the wind, I'll renew my subscription.

Jennifer L. Broadbent
Portland, OR



B REAL

Jon B reminds me of nineteenth-century white minstrels who wore blackface ["How Can Jon B Down?" by Deborah Gregory, November]. These so-called performers were no friends of the black community and neither is Jon B. He's exploiting black culture for his own gain, while having his way with the black women who are foolish enough to deal with him. If history repeats itself, Jon'll be proclaimed the king of hip hop soul, while the black originators of this art form languish in obscurity.

Diane Clark
Cincinnati, OH

Deborah Gregory gets much respect for the article on Jon B. He seems intelligent and well-rounded. And it's about time someone talked about interracial relationships. They're a reality for a lot of people, and Jon gets props for stressing that. The only gripe I have is that all the women who appear as girlfriends in his videos have light skin and curly hair. I'm not playa hating, but black women come in different shades, with various hair lengths and textures. If Jon's going to use black women in his videos, he ought to use all types. Represent for *all* black women, Jon.

La-Shawn Dixon
Bronx, NY

Talking about his Baptist church upbringing and around-the-way friends, Jon B had me fooled for a minute. I really thought he was down. Everything changed when he started raving about his favorite "flavor" of women—black girls with butterscotch skin and curly hair. Okay, everyone is entitled to their preference. But then, in an effort to show that he's impartial, Jon says, "I am also really attracted to the real ghetto girls straight out the 'hood." Sweetie, a ghetto girl can come in any complexion. Don't assume black women who don't fit the video mold are all this way. Jon B, you can only be down by learning about black people. Open your mind for real this time.

Flair Lindsey
SFTS Magazine
Washington, D.C.

Jon B's comment that he dates black women because he can relate to them really pissed me off. What does he know about being black? I think white people who say they're down because they've grown up around blacks or date them are taking it *too* far. Jon B says he goes to a black church and embraces our culture. *So?* If there was an article on a black artist who plays alternative music, relates to white women, and goes to a white church, would brothas and sistas be as accepting of him as they are of Jon B? I think not. He'd probably be called a sellout or an Uncle Tom. Yet when a white person embraces black people and culture, black folks are cool with it. Why is that? Please explain, black people.

April Bostic
Linden, NJ

Much props for your article on Jon B. It's nice to see a white boy accepted by the R&B industry. And it's good to know where Jon came from

GREG CHRISTIE

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Quitting Smoking Now Greatly Reduces Serious Risks to Your Health.

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Real Blues. Real Tobacco. Straight up. Winston

and that he's real. People need to start looking past skin color and listen to the music.

Krystal
Akron, OH

PUFFY PARADE

JD comes across as a straight-up Puffy playa hater/wannabe ["Big Boss Man," by kris ex, November]. He's jockin' Puffy so bad, I couldn't tell which one of them the article was about. His persistent claims that he's the first to get in the game overshadow his accomplishments. Who's he trying to convince, himself or his fans? JD should be thanking Puff, 'cause it wasn't until he shamelessly declared, "It's all about the Benjamins," that "pioneers" like JD got the courage to put on glossy yellow suits, lots of ice, and assert, "Money ain't a thang." Puffy's name is all over your style, JD. Get over yourself.

K.D.
Chicago, IL

I damn near busted a gut laughing when JD said, "You ask Puff to write a rhyme and you ask me to write a rhyme, and there's no way he could write a better rhyme than me." Of course. Puffy can't rap. Duh? JD has lyrical skill, but on the mike, he, like Puffy, sounds like *shit*. It's known that Dupri wrote three Kris Kross albums and most of Da Brat's albums. Hint! Stick to writing and leave the rapping to real MCs.

Namdam-I
Van Nuys, CA

ATL-IENS

When OutKast first came out I really felt their vibe ["Diff'rent Folks," by Gabriel Alvarez, November]. With their second album they brought fans something new. With their third joint, *Aquemini*, I couldn't get past the first cut. They're changing too much for me. Andre dresses like a freak. There's a difference between being different and trying to be someone you're not.

Robert Tanner
Shaker Heights, OH

SOUND CLASH

I can't believe Power 96's program director Kid Curry had the balls to say that many Latin people who set up pirate radio stations in Miami are "just off the boat," and that their stations' quality sucks ["Radio Free Florida," by Sarah Ferguson, November]. What does Power 96 know about quality? They don't even know what true heads want to hear. Their idea of hip hop is Puffy and Mase or whichever black person is in the Top Ten. And Kid Curry has the nerve to get upset when Power 96 loses listeners to real rap stations. I give props to Miami's 99 Jams because instead of wasting time dissing Latinos, they started their own hip hop show and hired underground DJs like DJ Khalid to spin tracks. And Kid Curry? He should watch his mouth before he loses even more of his Latin listeners.

Jessica De Soto
Miami, FL

TRU FANS

When talking about a family you should talk about the *whole* family ["The No Limit Family Tree," by Billy Jam, November]. In your No Limit tree you didn't mention Tre 8 (a crew who was with No Limit in the early days), Full Blooded, Ghetto Commission, Prime Suspects, Gambino Family, or Magic, who all have albums out.

Phillip Dominck
New Orleans, LA

(Editor's note: You're right! But we didn't forget, we just had to make decisions. Some of P's folks had to be edited out. Big up to the (very few) of P's groups we had to leave out for space reasons.)

On the No Limit family tree, it said that Mia X's first album was *Unlady Like*. I'd just like to correct you by saying Mia X's debut album was *Good Girl Gone Bad*.

Mr. Wizard Loco
Seattle, WA

(Editor's note: Good catch. Good Girl Gone Bad *was indeed Mia X's debut.)*

CHAKA DRAMA

In Tom Terrell's review of Chaka Khan's *Come 2 My House*, he credits Larry Graham's "boogie-bassing hypnotics" on the song "The Drama" [Revolutions, November], when actually, Larry's "bass hypnotics" are screaming on the track "Hair." I must point this out because "The Drama" is my *absolute* favorite track on the CD, and I think that Tom's statement misleads readers who've not had the pleasure of hearing a masterpiece like "The Drama." Otherwise, though, Mr. Terrell's review was off the hook. Keep it up!

K.L. Upchurch
Indianapolis, IN

SEXUAL HEALING

D'Angelo is the soul brother of the '90s. VC [Start, November] was on point in mentioning a cut his new album, *Voodoo*, that supposedly disses Chico DeBarge and Maxwell. I love them too, but D'Angelo's the only soul singer who's still able to make orgasmic music. Listening to him makes my nipples hard, and "Lady" still brings tears to my eyes. VIBE, please represent when his album drops.

Katrina Butler
Baltimore, MD

GOOD QUESTION!

I was highly offended by your comment that Monica might have been frontin' on her song, "The First Night" [20 Questions, November]. How do you know? Monica needs support, not doubt about what she will and won't do with her body. It sure would be nice to see you congratulating instead of insulting.

M.R. Powell
East Harlem, NY

Your question, "When will Jagged Edge get the props they deserve?" was a great one. Their debut, *A Jagged Era*, is slammin' and deserves much airplay (it gets none here in Arizona). In the future we'd like to see JE featured in VIBE because the world needs to know that this group's the bomb.

Nikki Johnson and Debbie Jones
Mesa, AZ

The 20 Questions writers are very talented, but I have a question of my own: *Where* do they find those people for MTV's *Eye Spy*?!

Danita D. Harris
San Jose, CA

"JON B REMINDS ME OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY WHITE MINSTRELS WHO WORE BLACKFACE. THESE SO-CALLED PERFORMERS WERE NO FRIENDS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY, AND NEITHER IS JON B."



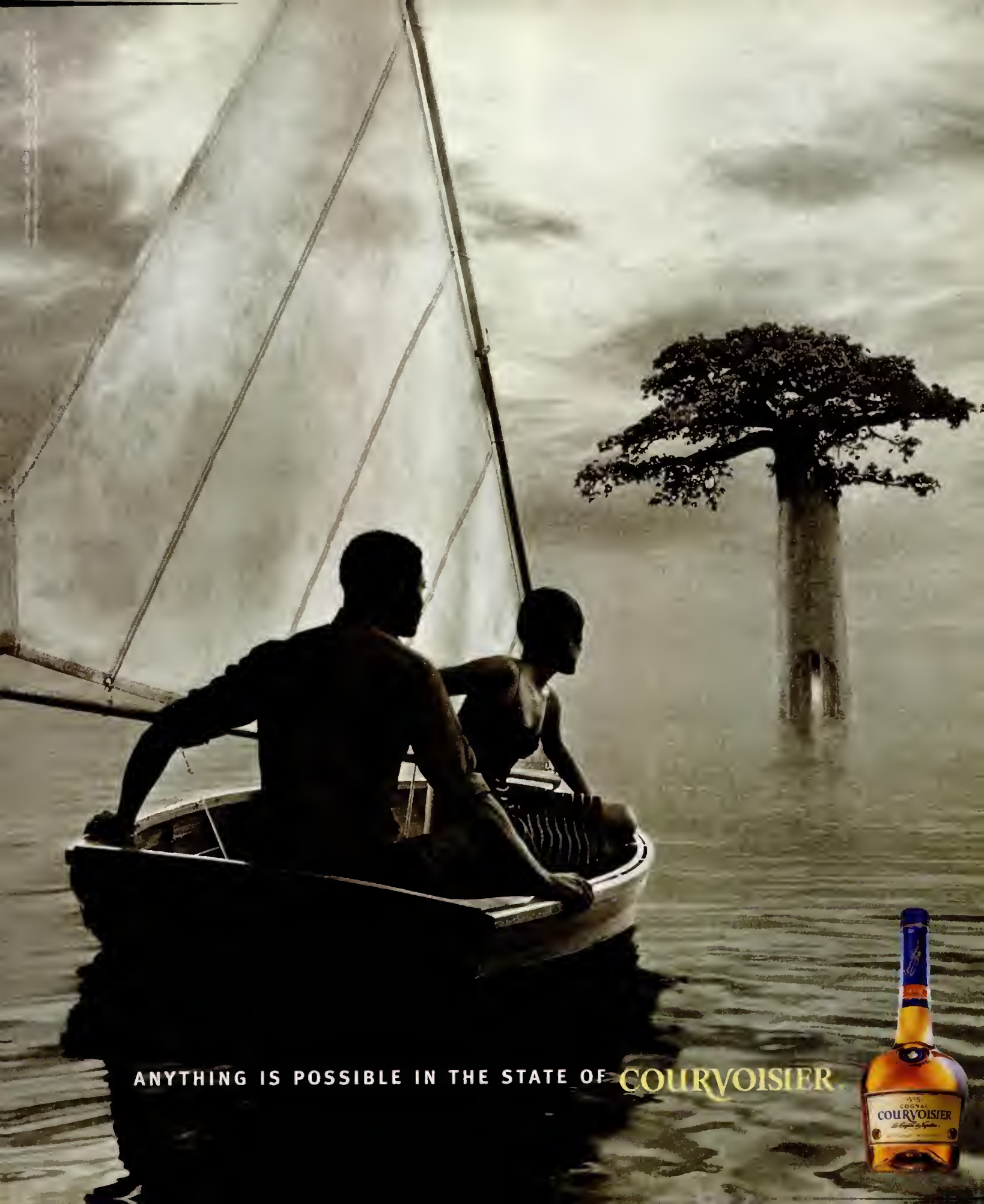
YOUR BEST SHOT

Walik Goshorn
New York, New York

CORRECTION

•In "Loot Dreams" [by Peter Relic, Dec./Jan.], we reported that Andre Farr, chair of the Black Sports Agents Association, acts as sports agent to Jason Kidd, Gary Payton, and Deion Sanders. In fact, Kidd and Payton are represented by Aaron Goldwin, a board member of BSAA. Sanders is represented by Eugene Parker.

VIBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIBE MAIL, 215 Lexington Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10016 (include your daytime phone number). Or send E-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (same address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returned.


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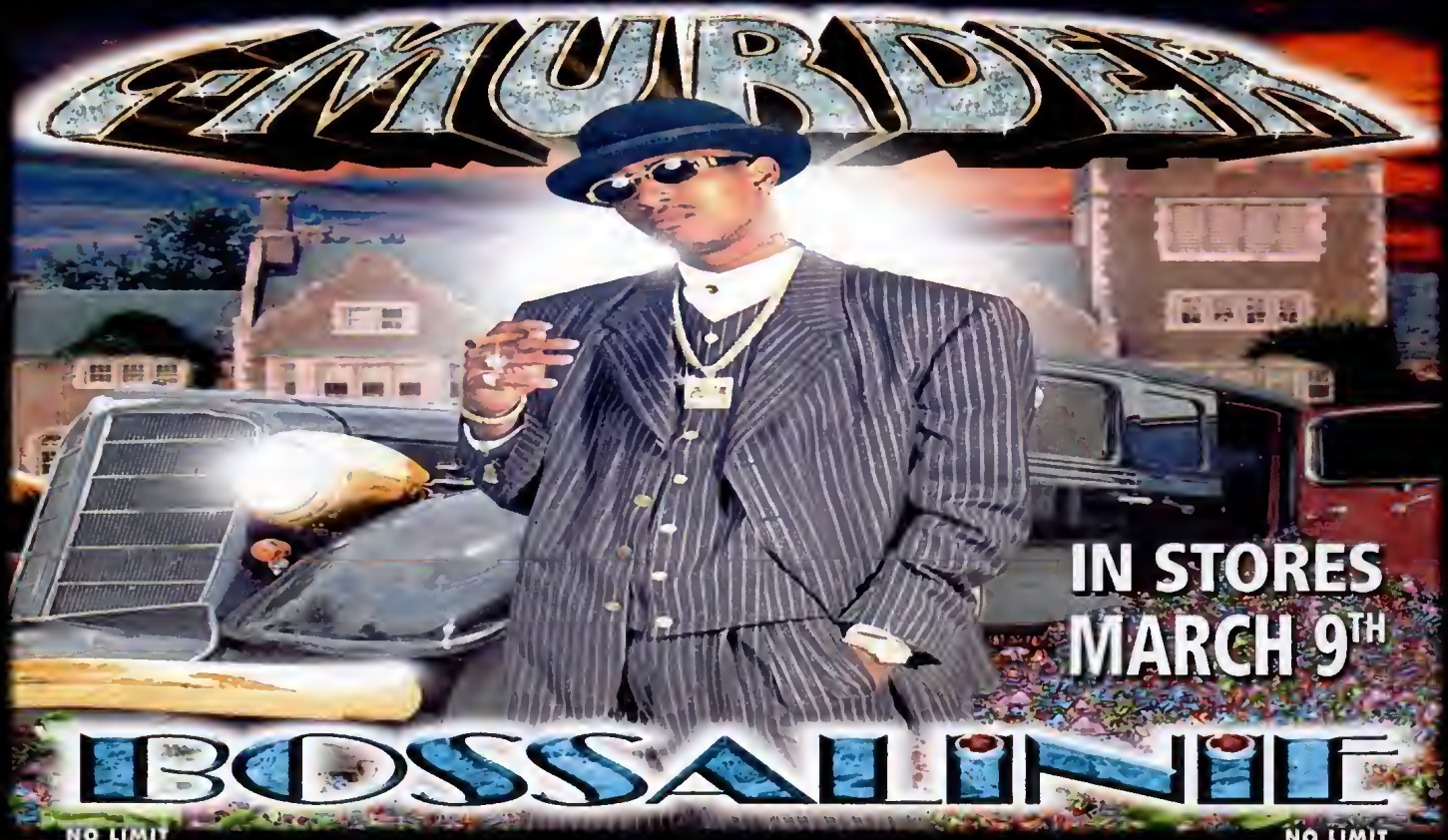
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START

ARTISTS ARE RUSHING UP ON JOURNALISTS AND TRYING TO HURT THEM PHYSICALLY. TRYING TO TRAIN THEM EMOTIONALLY. TRYING TO INFLUENCE DECISIONS. ¶ IT'S CRAZY. STAKES IS HIGH, I GUESS. MONEY, POWER, RESPECT. PRIDE. FAME. HISTORY. REPRESENTATION. MONEY. ¶ PEOPLE GET THREATENED SUBTLY. PEOPLE GET TOLD THEY CAN BE "TOUCHED." PEOPLE GET TOLD THEY WILL BE "WRECKED." AND SOMETIMES, WORSE. BLOOD. SWOLL-UP FACES. RAH-RAH. HAIR PULLED. FACE STOMPED. JAW SLAMMED. OFFICES INVADED BY BIG ANGRY CATS WITH BASEBALL BATS. BULLETPROOF GLASS SINCE THE '80S OVER AT A ROCK MAG WE KNOW ABOUT. OFFICE DOORS KICKED IN. EDITORS BRINGING GUNS TO WORK TO PROTECT THEMSELVES. IT DOESN'T HAPPEN A LOT. IT DOESN'T EVEN HAPPEN OFTEN. BUT IT HAPPENS. AND IT'S NOT NEW. ¶ THE BEST JOURNALISTS AREN'T TRYING TO JUST GUSH ALL OVER PERFORMERS. THEY ARE TRYING TO BE CRITICS AS WELL AS FANS. TRYING TO NEGOTIATE THAT FINE LINE BETWEEN *SUPPORTING* THE WORLD'S MUSIC—HIP POP—AND *GIVING IT THE RESPECT IT DESERVES* BY CRITIQUING IT HONESTLY. FAIRLY. SERIOUSLY, AND WITH VIGOR AND LOVE AND THOROUGHNESS AND ATTITUDE. ¶ ANY GOOD JOURNALIST'S RESPONSE TO THIS VIOLENCE IS AWE. YES. AND FEAR. AND ANGER. AND THE SAME SENSE OF PURPOSE THAT THEY STARTED WITH. THE PROCESS OF LISTENING, REPORTING, WRITING, CRITIQUING, DOCUMENTING THIS MUSIC AND CULTURE WITH THE *READERS* IN MIND. ¶ IN SOME WAYS WE ARE SCARED, THOUGH. WE REALIZE THIS IS NOT SAIGON CIRCA 1968. BUT THE FISTS AND THE THREATS ARE REAL. THE LAND MINES ARE VISIBLE BUT SOMETIMES UNAVOIDABLE. ¶ SO WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO? ¶ KEEP GOING, I GUESS.

Danyel Smith, Editor-in-Chief

ILLUSTRATION BY BRANDON KAVULLA

Soul Sense Asian

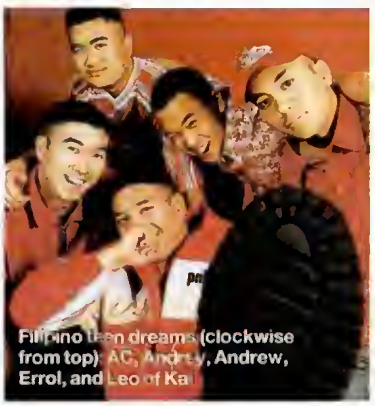
A new wave of hip hop and R&B artists prove that soul comes in many colors



They'll be comin' round when they come (from left): Peril-L, Chops, and Styles of the Mountain Brothers

The Texans couldn't believe their eyes when the members of Kai took the stage for a concert at the Far West Rodeo Club in Houston. As group member AC Lorenzo recalls, "All of a sudden, you heard people going, 'That's them? That's them!?! I didn't know y'all was Chinese!' "

Well, not exactly...one member is Chinese. The other four are Filipino-American. But since last year, when Kai signed a multi-album deal with Geffen Records, such incidents have become commonplace for the smooth-crooning Bay Area–based balladeers. Although the spectacle of Asian-American R&B singers remains as astonishing to some, as, say, Amish club divas, Kai successfully melds the tradition-rich harmonies of Boyz II Men with the sentiments of Asian pop (a breezy, sugary sound popular in southeast Asia). Released this summer, Kai's self-titled debut album reflects a fresh voice in urban pop culture.



Filipino teen dreams (clockwise from top): AC, Andrey, Andrew, Errol, and Leo of Kai

Expect such voices to grow louder. Asian-Americans are the fastest-growing racial group in the United States, with a current population of 10 million. Already, in California, Filipino-American DJ crews like the Invisibl Skratch Piklz dominate the hip hop underground; Jocelyn Enriquez, also of Filipino descent, drops high-energy dance ditties for clubgoers; and the biggest personality in urban radio is Theo Mizuhara, a Japanese-American featured on L.A.'s KKBT-92.3 FM (The Beat).

Still, these success stories haven't erased more dubious pop-culture legacies. Styles, a member of Philadelphia's underground hip hop trio the Mountain Brothers, remembers comments from one overzealous label rep whom the Chinese- and Taiwanese-American crew spoke with during their search for a deal. "He was like, 'Why don't you guys dress up in some robes and battle for the mike?' "

"...hit gongs and shit," interjects Styles' partner Chops.

"We still get people saying, 'Hey, you guys should rhyme about kung fu,' " Styles adds. (The Mountain Brothers put out their "Paperchase" single on Ruffhouse Records in 1997 but left the label later that year over creative differences. This past fall, they released their album *Self, Volume 1* independently.)

Even the 2 Live Crew's half-black/half-Chinese Fresh Kid Ice (a.k.a. Chris Wong Won) feels the pressure to represent in his own special way. In 1992, Ice released a solo album on Effect/Luke Records named after his childhood moniker: *The Chinaman*.

"People make fun of the Chinese people," says the Miami-bass icon. "They say we got little 'things'." But Ice, author of a song called "Long Dick Chinese," says he's never let misconceptions interfere with his career. "Most Oriental people are sexual people," he reasons. "Look at China, look at the population."

Kai needn't look that far for validation. The group's hit, "Say You'll Stay," became the top-selling single in the San Francisco Bay Area last January, and their album topped *Billboard*'s Regional Heatseekers album chart for the Pacific Region in July.

According to group management, building on the support of California's large Asian community will be key to Kai's national success.

But race should never be the central focus, says tenor baritone Andrey Silva. "We're *singers*. Just like Boyz II Men. Just like K-Ci & JoJo. Only thing is, we happen to be Asian."

Corey Takahashi

Signed, Sealed, Delivered



VIBE *intercepts some hot and heavy hip hop valentines*

A mailbag smelling of incense and Chanel No. 5 mistakenly found its way to VIBE's doorstep recently. When we looked inside, we found a collection of cards carrying Valentine's Day wishes. Join us for a sneak peek at 1999's Stoopid Cupid groove.

Kevin O'Leary

Usher,
Don't let love blind you this Valentine's Day. Eyes on the cash, boy. Toni B.

Dear (fill in name here),
You're my one and only.
Lil' Kim

Tommy,
How ya like me now?
~~Derek says hi.~~
Mariah

Jewel,
Stop beepin' me and sendin' me crazy poems and shit.
Lilith was fun, but it's over.
Missy

Puffy,
Without you, I'm nothing.
Mase

Sparkle,
When it comes to you I just say, "I do." R.
P.S. Congrats on acing that algebra test.

Dear Dre,
You're still makin' me high.
C. DeLores Tucker

KAI ANN GIORDANO; JEWEL: NORMAN NOGHTLINE; MISSY: ERIC JOHNSON/OUTLINE; PUFFY, MASE, AND LIL' KIM: ERNIE PANICCIOLI; DR. DRE: EDIE BARON/OUTLINE


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START



Serving Pendants

All across hip hop land, jewel-encrusted neckwear is hangin' like Mr. Cooper

Hip hop pendants have been around as long as two turntables and a microphone. From Flavor Flav's colossal color-coded clocks to Master P's No Limit tank, dangling medallions have always rep'd one's credentials. As Cali's ghetto fabuloso Ras Kass says, "it's like having a second ID." While logo plates display label loyalty, custom-made decorations epitomize the wearer's unique jigginess. Herewith, seven fierce impresarios discuss their coveted chunks. *Corey Moss*



BIG PUNISHER

Pendants: gold image of Jesus with 150 diamonds (on a rope with 187 diamonds); gold Terror Squad logo with 500 diamonds. "They symbolize that I can finally have whatever I want. I wouldn't wear anything without ice. I gotta have the shine. Women like the shine. They like diamonds—they're a woman's best friend."



DA BRAT

Pendant: gold image of a littie girl (50 diamonds). "I was at a party at the Roxy in Atlanta. I had gotten a little tipsy and leaned against the wall with my arms folded in front of me. A photographer took a picture. From that, my big brother had an artist draw a likeness of me, and the logo was born."

PRODIGY, MOBB DEEP

Pendants: gold crow's foot with 45 diamonds; gold MAC-10 semiautomatic (his favorite gun) with removable clip; gold King Tut coffin with gold mummy inside. "I draw them myself and [the jewelers make them]. Kool G Rap, Rakim, Kool Moe Dee—they all wore pendants. When I was, like, 11, I said, One day, I'm gonna get one of them. [I wear 'em] all the way down to my hips. None of that down to your chest shit."



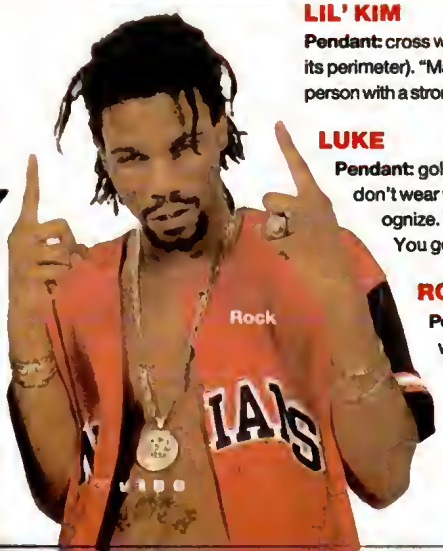


USHER

Pendant: 18-karat white gold letter "U" with 216 diamonds. "It stands for untouchable, unbelievable, and unstoppable. I have a security guard who watches my jewelry, but I don't view it as one of my most-valued possessions. I put my car and dog above it."

LIL' KIM

Pendant: cross with crystal embedded in a platinum frame (five karats in diamonds around its perimeter). "Mary J. Blige gave it to me over a year ago at Biggie's funeral. I'm a very religious person with a strong belief in God. It represents my spirituality."



LUKE

Pendant: gold Luke Records logo with 130 diamonds. "When I'm Luther Campbell, I don't wear the pendant. I wear it when I become 'Luke'. It's something the ladies recognize. They're always trying to snatch it. Fuck puttin' it in your shoes [at the hotel]. You gotta lock that bad boy up."

ROCK, HELTAH SKELTAH

Pendant: solid-gold, two-dimensional globe with a gold frame. "I'm obsessed with being worldwide. I have a globe ring and globe tattoo. When people stare at [the pendant], they don't want you to notice them. They don't realize I bought it *for* them to stare at."

VIBE'S ILLUMINATI WATCH

Beanie Babies



Happy 1999, freedom lovers. The new year, however, brings no cheer to Illuminati Watch headquarters...only fear. Fear for the future of freedom itself. Fear of a fever for a flava. Fear of a fever for a flava that leads to lemming-like behavior. Fear, my friends, of the Beanie Baby.

What's that, you say? Those cuddly little beanbags shaped like cute critters from the animal kingdom? Certainly they seem harmless enough. I mean, they're available at McDonald's, so they *couldn't* be unhealthy, right? Wrong. *Dead wrong.*

Turns out that our soft, collectible friends are actually enemies in disguise—perhaps the most effective opiate of the masses since the advent of television. Illuminati Watch first grew suspicious two years ago, when reports started coming in of grown men and women falling into blind, mob-minded frenzies each time a new version of these "children's toys" hit the shelves of drugstores and gift shops. Last May, when McDonald's started a cross-promotion campaign with their Happy Meals (fittingly named, as they're laced with Prozac) and Beanie Babies, nearly 220 million of the colorful crib fillers sold out in the first week.

Illuminati Watch was on it like a bonnet. Here's the deal on the devil sacks:

Ty Inc., the Oak Brook, Ill.-based company that manufactures and distributes Beanie Babies, is actually a cloak for the C.I.A.'s Illuminati-funded drug-importation operation. It's not actually *beans* inside those moldable Beanie Bodies—it's crack rocks. (This explains why certain breeds have fetched upward of $5,000 on the black market, the dazed look on the faces of collectors come the first of the month, and the oft-heard expression, "Bean me up, Scotty.")

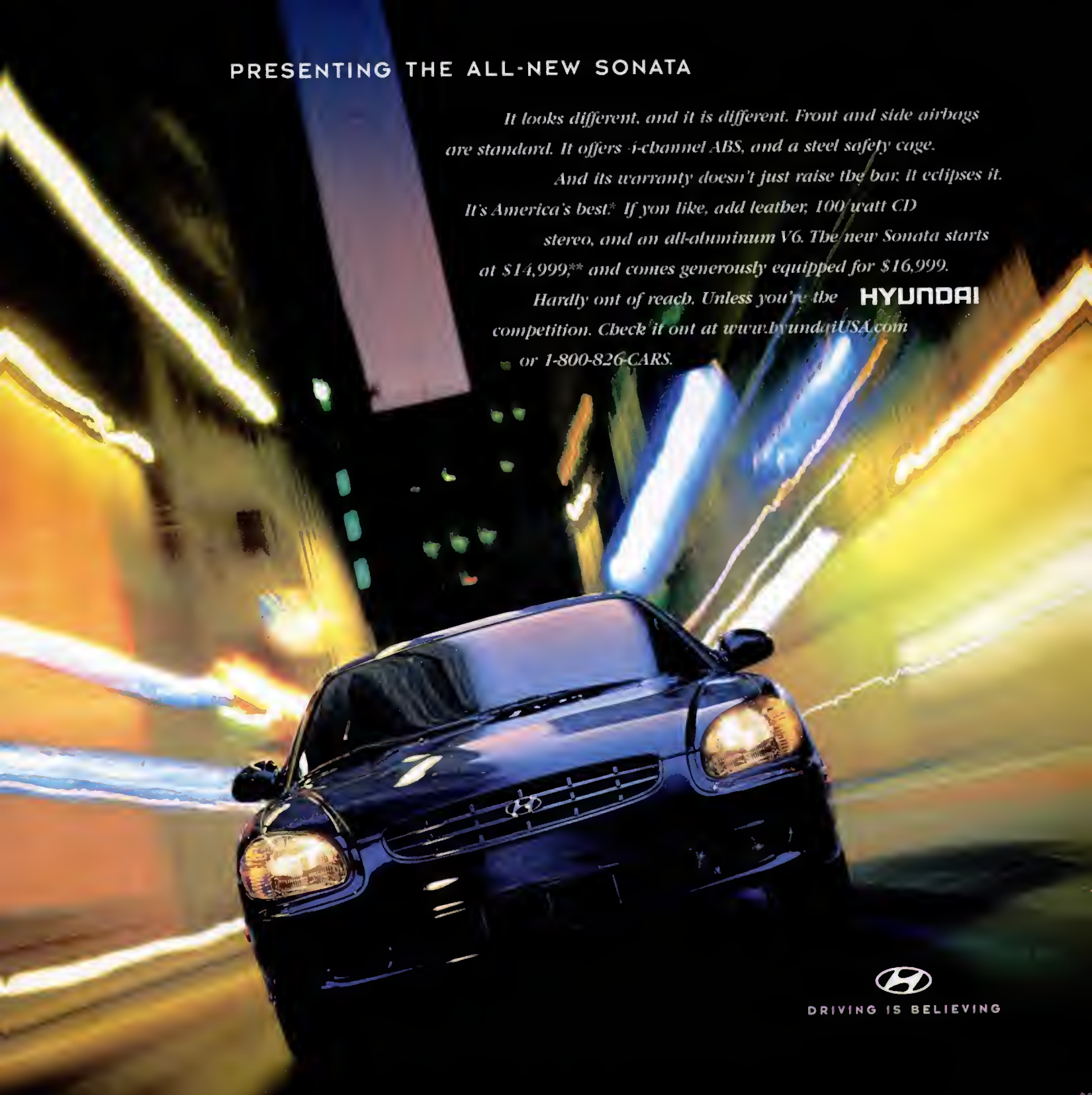
Of course, secret-society–controlled, novelty-product–addicted America's favorite refrain is, "I can handle it." A recent *Wall Street Journal* article even predicted the fall of the Beanie Baby market. But freedom lovers, denial *ain't* just a river in Africa! Consider this an intervention.

BIG PUN: PIOTR BIKONA; DA BRAT: TIMOTHY WHITE/OUTLINE; USHER: MICHAEL WALLS/OUTLINE; LIL' KIM: STEVE BANDS/OUTLINE; ROCK AND PRODIGY: ANTHONY OUTAJAR


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Ivonna: Hair by Serge Normant, Lips in Matte Blaque by Rouge Virtuale.
Janine: Hair by Michel Aleman, Lips in Espresso by Rouge Virtuale.
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WHEN WE WERE KINGS

How the mighty have fallen. Is this the end of an era?

"Do you ever think about / When you're outta here?"
—KRS-One, *Return of the Boom Bap* (Jive, 1993)

Although hip hop continues to shatter SoundScan records and dominate the *Billboard* charts, one fact remains: Most rappers' moment in the limelight is short-lived. While old-timers like L.L. Cool J, Ice Cube, and the Beastie Boys brought slick, radio-friendly jams last year, many other once notable MCs put out product that just, well, fell short. As always, rhyme slingers have to prove themselves every time out.

The rap masters seen here were the cream of the crop at one time or another, but, no longer being the driving forces they once were, they've been replaced. Let would-be new jacks beware: The game never changes, just the players. *Elliott Wilson*



KOOL G RAP

Steez: Queens' raunchy lyricist
Jumbo Tune: 1992's "Ill Street Blues"
Track Record: Well respected by his peers as a storyteller, G had enough timeless classics to comprise a greatest hits album, 1992's *Killer Kuts* (Cold Chillin').
Latest Release: *Roots of Evil* (Illstreet/Down Low/KTD)
Why It Didn't Blow Up: Where's Marley Marl when you need him? The beats on this album smell like trash.
Final Analysis: It's his second failed comeback attempt (see 1995's *4,5,6*). One more strike and you're out.
Who's Holding His Spot: Straight off the streets of Lefrak City, Queens, superthug **Noreaga** is on the road to riches.



BIG DADDY KANE

Steez: Brooklyn-born MC who's strong enough for a man but made for a woman
Jumbo Tune: 1989's "Warm It Up, Kane"
Track Record: After dropping classics in the late '80s, Kane's image took a beating when his extracurricular activities (nude modeling for *Playgirl* and Madonne's *Sex* book) began to overshadow his musical output.
Latest Release: *Veteranz Day* (The Label/Mercury)
Why It Didn't Blow Up: Nobody wants to hear his or her father rapping. An old pimp's game just ain't the same.
Final Analysis: Hang it up Kane, hang it up Kane.
Who's Holding His Spot: BK's finest, **Jay-Z**, is a fly girl's dream and a wack MC's worst nightmare.





QUEEN LATIFAH

Steez: New Jersey sista who raps *and* sings
Jumbo Tune: 1989's "Ladies First"
Track Record: Her royal highness gained respect with her first album, 1989's *All Hail the Queen* (Tommy Boy), and struck gold with her third, 1993's *Black Reign* (Motown).
Latest Release: *Order in the Court* (Motown)
Why It Didn't Blow Up: Trying too hard to please all audiences, Lah alienated both hardcore heads and hit seekers with the schizophrenic double-sided single, "Paper," a Motown remake, and "Bananas," which was just that.
Final Analysis: Stick to acting or call Jay-Z for 45 King's phone number.
Who's Holding Her Spot: Conscious Garden State songbird **Lauryn Hill**





A TRIBE CALLED QUEST

Steez: Groundbreaking collective composed of two distinctive MCs and a DJ
Jumbo Tune: 1990's "Can I Kick It?"
Track Record: With three classic albums, hip hop's first model of consistency seemed indestructible until 1996's *Beats, Rhymes and Life* (Jive).
Latest Release: *The Love Movement* (Jive)
Why It Didn't Blow Up: With the group no longer functioning as a cohesive unit, the album suffered from too much movement in opposite directions.
Final Analysis: The Quest is over; the group have thrown in the towel.
Who's Holding Their Spot: With their latest opus, *Aquemini* (LaFace, 1998), **OutKast** have set the new standard of artistic growth.





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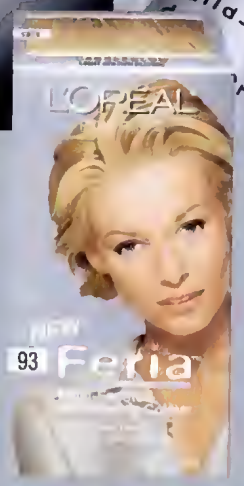
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PUBLIC ENEMY

Steez: Conscious rap crew who educate as well as entertain
Jumbo Tune: 1988's "Don't Believe the Hype"
Track Record: Authors of simply the *greatest* rap album of all time: 1988's *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (Def Jam)
Latest Release: Soundtrack for the movie *He Got Game* (Def Jam)
Why It Didn't Blow Up: The album wasn't half bad, but it didn't benefit from the sing-along promo single named after the film.
Final Analysis: With the right production from contemporary trackmasters, PE could rise again.
Who's Holding Their Spot: Goodie MOb's Southern patch of wisdom nourishes the minds of listeners without going over their heads.





MC LYTE

Steez: Female rapper who can rock with the ruffnecks
Jumbo Tune: 1993's "Ruffneck"
Track Record: Former tomboy whose career took a Kane-like nosedive when she appeared with makeup on the cover of her third LP, 1991's *Act Like You Know* (First Priority/Atlantic)
Latest Release: *Seven & Seven* (EastWest)
Why It Didn't Blow Up: Her sixth album, a bland collection of R&B flavored hip hop, belied her first single, "I Can't Make a Mistake."
Final Analysis: Lyte's out.
Who's Holding Her Spot: One of *Seven*'s many collaborators, supa dupa rap talent **Missy Elliott**





CYPRESS HILL

Steez: Weed-smoking Latino crew
Jumbo Tune: 1991's "How I Could Just Kill a Man"
Track Record: You know what's happenin'...their first three albums went platinum.
Latest Release: *Cypress Hill IV* (Ruffhouse/Columbia)
Why It Didn't Blow Up: All that cannabis rap is played out.
Final Analysis: When the ship goes down...
Who's Holding Their Spot: Light on the chronic references, but heavy on the *boricua* flavor, **Fat Joe** and his fellow Terror Squadian **Big Pun**





YO YO

Steez: Spunky female vocalist who takes no shorts
Jumbo Tune: 1990's "You Can't Play With My Yo Yo"
Track Record: This former Ice Cube protégée was the first West Coast female rapper to gain national respect.
Latest Release: The currently on-hold *Ebony* (EastWest)
Why It Didn't Blow Up: Since the lukewarm reception of her first single "Is It Still All Good," rumors persist that Yo Yo has been dropped by her label.
Final Analysis: With an image that's more Levert than Lil' Kim, this Yo Yo has lost some of its snap.
Who's Holding Her Spot: The mouth of the South, **Mia X**



START

Bobbito plays the tracks. Kobe Bryant states the facts.

Hey, Jon B's in the house!" says Kobe Bryant, laughing, when I step into New York's Hit Factory.

"Money, you trying to snap?" I ask. "That's why you're wearing bell-bottoms." It's no surprise Kobe and I get along. We share passions—for hip hop and basketball—and the same high school alma mater, Lower Merion, in Ardmore, Pa. Although I graduated twelve years before he did, I felt much pride when he made our school a household name in 1996 , the year he jumped from his senior year in high school to the NBA's Los Angeles Lakers.

In '98, Kobe represented again as the youngest baller in history to play in an NBA All-Star game. And while the current league lockout threatens to shut down the Lakers' dreams of a 1999 championship, Kobe's not sweating it. The six-foot-seven-inch guard's making moves as CEO and president of the one-year-old Kobe Family Entertainment. He's also pickin' up the mike as part of a rap group signed to Trackmasters/Columbia. After our interview, he played me some milky-thick instrumentals, then later he rocked complex rhymes during his interview on New York's Hot 97 FM (WQHT). This cat Kobe is smart. And cool—mad cool.

Public Enemy—"Brothers Gonna Work It Out" (Def Jam, 1990)

B: Do you know this song?

K.B.: It's Public Enemy. Everybody knows them. Back in the day, me and my cousin used to do the Flavor Flav dance! My grandma would be like, "Kobe, what are you *doing*? You got an itch down there?" I'd be like, Grandma, it's the new *dance*.

B: I used to work at Def Jam—from '89 to '93—and Flav would come into the office and literally take it over. Nothing could be done, workwise, while he was there. One time, he got on top of my desk and was doing his dance. He was like that all the time. It wasn't an act for the stage or videos. That's just Flav.

De La Soul featuring Pete Rock and Inl —"Stay Away" (unreleased bootleg, 1998)

B: This record is beautiful. Do you like it?

K.B.: *Hell yeah.* It makes you want to listen and do nothing else. Not like some other songs—you hear them and want to punch the table. Even the lyrics have a melody. De La always *bring* it lyrically. You can always expect that they'll rhyme honestly about what they see.

B: I can listen to their first album, which is ten years old, and still not know *what the fuck* they're talking about. Regardless, their voices, delivery, flow, and intelligence make them one of my favorites of all time.

K.B.: When one of their songs comes on, you have to listen. But today, a lot of people don't have the patience for that.

B: Do you have a different name for yourself as an MC?

K.B.: Kobe, plain and simple.

B: What's the name of your group?

K.B.: Cheizaw. It stands for Canon Homo sapien Eclectic Iconic Zaibatsu Abstract Words. Canon is the ruler of the spiritual body. Homo sapien is the [scientific] term for human beings. Eclectic means choosing the best of very diverse styles. Icon is a symbol. Zaibatsu is a Japanese word for powerful family. Abstract makes concentration extremely difficult. Words, meaning lyrics. That'sCheizaw–that's how we're putting it down. Six members, all from Philly...Illadelph!

4 Hero—"Loveless" featuring Ursula Rucker (Talkin Loud/Mercury, 1998)

K.B.: I feel that joint to the most. I love that stuff there. Who is that?

B: It's a drum n' bass group called 4 Hero, out of London. The poet, Ursula, is from Philly. She's on the Roots' first 2 albums, *Do You Want More?!!!??!* (DGC, 1995) and *Illadelph Halflife* (Geffen, 1996), and I hear she does a poem on their upcoming release too. She's *ill*—on some real emotional poetry shit.

K.B.: Yeah, man. I love poetry. Don't you have a famous [poetry spot] out here [in New York]?

B: The Nuyorican Poets' Cafe. My man Ricky and I do shows there twice a month. Common, Wyclef, Saul Williams from that movie *Slam*, and Roy Hargrove have all come down and jammed.

K.B.: I've never been to a spot like that before, but I love poetry. I love writing it.

B: Have you ever checked out Gil Scott-Heron? I highly recommend him.

Nancy Wilson—"Call Me" (Pickwick/Capitol, 1966)

K.B.: Sounds like the melody from that TV show, from back in the day. The one with two girls in it...two roommates...

B: *Three's Company*?

K.B.: Nah, I think it was *Laverne & Shirley*... I don't know this record at all. I don't know what you want me to say.

B: Well, does it make you happy or sad? Does it make you want to take a shit?

K.B.: It makes me...[*snaps his fingers and shimmies with his shoulders*]. *You* know what I mean. Ha, ha!



Illadelph good life: Bobbito and Kobe

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH A. FRIEDMAN

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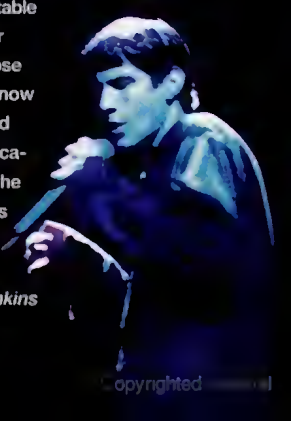
THE BEASTIE BOYS

Sept. 11-12 Great Western Forum

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANNY CLINCH

Sometimes, a picture (or in this instance, 14 pictures) has to be worth more than 2,500 words. (Sorry, fellas.) But in all honesty, when the Beastie Boys kick it live, party people are bound to get bizzaaaaayyyyy!!! They put on a performance that puts shame in most hip hop groups' (and Ringling Bros.') game. A rotating stage that looks like a giant aboveground kiddie pool. An intergalactic light show à la R2D2. Keyboardist Money Mark Nishita. Skins banger AWOL. Percussionist Alfredo Ortiz. Turntable showstopper Mix Master Mike. And, of course, those three bad brothers you know so well: Mike D, MCA, and The King Ad-Rock. On location—they were touring the nation—the Beastie Boys were truly entertaining to this Haitian.

Sacha Jenkins



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JUST ANOTHER GIRL ON THE IRT

It's not easy being a female DJ, especially if you used to be a guy. by Jeff Salamon

"Dear Friends," began the letter DJ Joe LeSesne sent on June 1 to colleagues in the tight-knit jungle community. "I've decided to live a happier life and part of that involves switching my gender. As of today I am no longer Joe, but Jordana." The letter, which LeSesne wrote in two drafts, quickly made the rounds, faxed and e-mailed from DJs to record stores to club owners. LeSesne, who records for New York's Jungle Sky Records under the name 1.8.7, is one of the most respected drum 'n' bass producers in the U.S. But all the props in the world couldn't guarantee that her coming-out letter wouldn't be met with snickers—or worse.

"I thought someone who hated Joe put that shit on the Internet," wrote one jungle promoter on the Net's Breaks List. "In house music it wouldn't be uncommon since it came from the gay scene, BUT...I can't even elaborate on the subject. Someone help me out." That note of confusion set the tone for the debate that followed.

For the most part, club culture is a place where boys don't always look like boys. But drum 'n' bass is a bit stricter. In England, jungle was created more than seven years ago by West Indian kids who brought their love of rap and reggae to the acid-house scene. It was a tough sound that married the macho swagger of hip hop with the anything-goes vibe of rave culture. As Mac McFarlane, promoter of New York's Konkrete Jungle, the longest-running drum 'n' bass night in North America, notes, "Lots of people imitate that 'Oh, we're hard-rock men' kind of thing." Which led many scenesters to wonder: Would a gender-switching DJ, even one who had been pushing the music since Day One, be welcomed in the world of jungle?

Eric Holt, label manager at Jungle Sky, heard about LeSesne's decision two months before she went public. "My reaction was basically supportive. This label has such a diverse group of people; everyone here has a liberal view of the world."

Still, when a guy becomes a gal there are going to be a few gaffes. Standing in his East Village basement office recently, Holt bit down hard on a Camel Light cigarette and grimaced as he looked at one such mistake—the promo poster for 1.8.7's second album, *Quality Rolls*. A moment ago, Holt seemed excited as he unveiled the 17"x 13" sheet for LeSesne's approval. But his enthusiasm dimmed as he watched LeSesne's eyes settle on the slogan at the bottom of the poster: "I Am Woman, Hear Me Roll."

Although she had previously approved the tag line for magazine ads, LeSesne balked at the poster's oversize letters: gender switch as marketing tool. "Had they used a smaller font I probably wouldn't have had a problem," LeSesne explained later. Meanwhile, Holt, a former aerospace engineer, was left to figure out how to make the problem go away.

"When I was six or seven I knew I didn't really fit in," says the slim, pretty LeSesne, getting as close to the tape recorder as she can, since she's still working on projecting her new higher-pitched voice. Though biologically male, Joe LeSesne always felt like a girl, a conflict she learned to keep secret as early as kindergarten. By her teens, she says her sense of alienation had only gotten worse. "I didn't have any close friends I could talk to once I knew what was going on. I didn't see any way out." A handful of times, she found herself poised to jump from a window ledge—or about to run a blade across her wrists.

Dr. Randi Ettner, a clinical psychologist specializing in gender conditions, says LeSesne's despair is common among transsexuals. "Children with gender-identity disorders shun intimate relationships for fear their secrets will be discovered. They wind up going through the motions of childhood and grow up feeling very hollow." As a result, says Dr. Ettner, nearly 35 percent of transsexuals who do not seek counseling attempt suicide.

But in 1991, while checking out a rave in Washington, D.C., then 19-year-old LeSesne heard something that made her heart race. "It tied together everything I was into, but sounded completely different from everything else," she remembers. "There were the odd sub-rhythms from my dad's jazz collection tied in with hip hop sampling, the aggression of rock, as well as that reggae thing."

In fact, it's easy to hear in jungle's multiplicity a metaphor for the confusion young Joe LeSesne was experiencing. With its half-speed bass lines and double-time breakbeats, jungle is made of things that shouldn't go together. When she heard that demented jumble, LeSesne swapped the guitar she had been playing in local punk and reggae bands for a sampler and started producing tracks with a vengeance. "I pretty much lost myself in that. It was a really good outlet for releasing all kinds of feelings." For seven years LeSesne found refuge in music. But by last winter, she realized that it wasn't enough. "What really scared me was that the time in between the suicide attempts was getting shorter. I knew that I wouldn't be happy unless I became a woman, and if I didn't I was either going to kill myself or end up completely nuts in some institution."

Every transitioning transsexual needs support, and LeSesne's pillar has been her girlfriend, Stephanie. Although

Being a poster girl for transsexuality isn't her idea of a career.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXEI HAY



STYLING BY JASON FARRER/ART DEPT ; HAIR BY FREDERICK PARNELL/BRYAN BANTRY ; MAKEUP BY FIONA BHAW

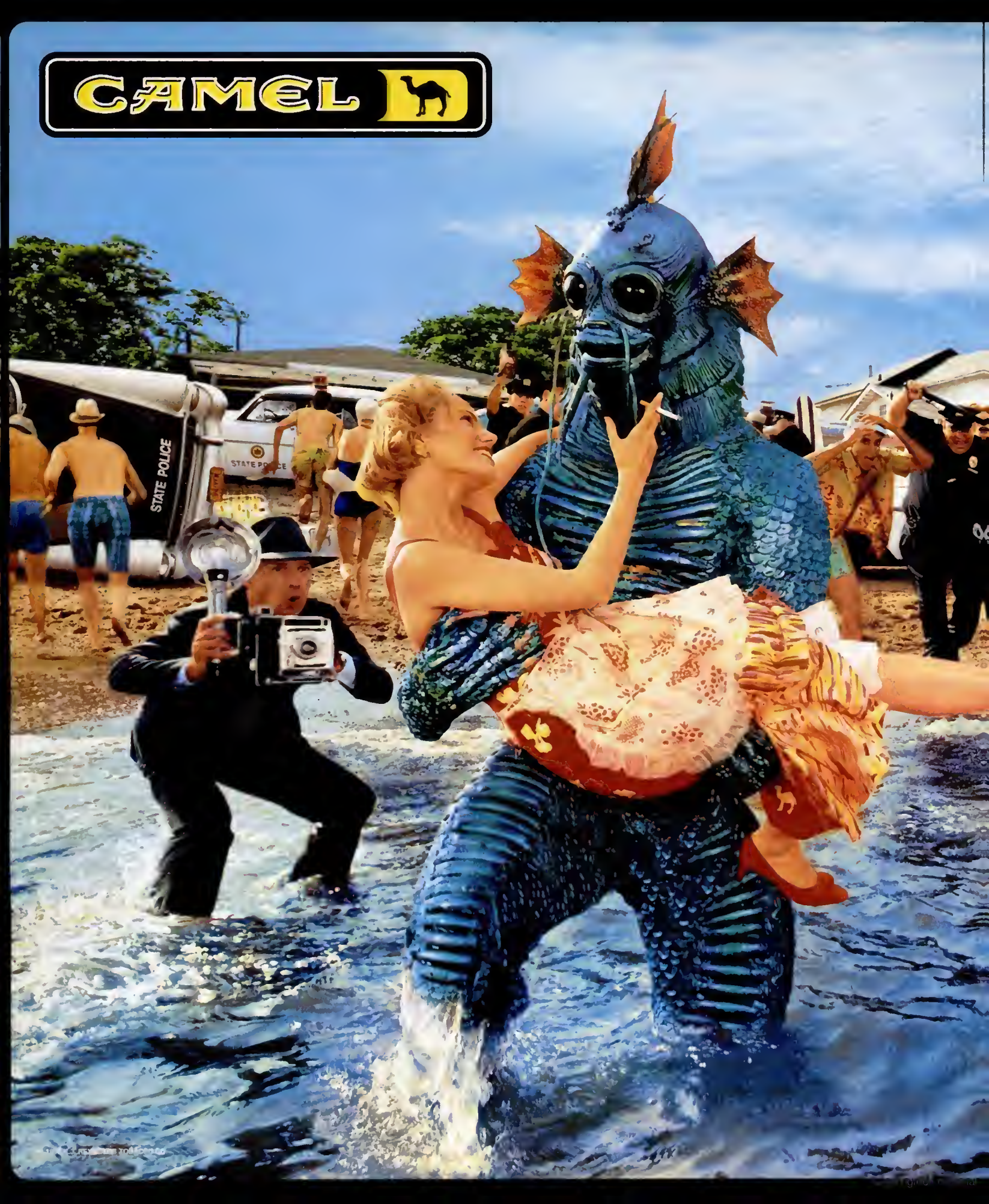
Stephanie and Joe were a "straight" couple for the better part of two years, they have decided to stay together even though Joe has become Jordana. As it turns out, LeSesne's inner woman is an inner lesbian. "I'm not really the martyr girlfriend sticking by her sweetie in times of need," says Stephanie. "I'm the lucky one. I've found a beautiful, loving, smart, talented, deeply *good* person to share huge chunks of my existence with."

Last spring, LeSesne decided to transition, a process that entails learning to walk, talk, and dress like a woman, and taking hormones. If all goes well, in a few months LeSesne will have gender-reassignment surgery (a.k.a. a sex-change operation).

This is touchy stuff. When she publicly announced her decision last summer, LeSesne didn't know how it would play in the jungle world. The response on the Breaks List was mixed. Some postings were hostile ("I think it's a sick way to promote your new CD"), others unswervingly supportive ("What she did took a lot of courage and you and I both know that it won't change her skill as a producer"). The most vivid, though, were a hodgepodge of ignorance, macho posturing, and oddly sincere, if unconvincing, protestations of tolerance. "I don't know what to think of it," posted one drum 'n' bass MC. "If that's what makes the guy happy then big up to him... [But] I still find the faceless ness of [jungle] very appealing. Unlike the house scene, batty-boy antics aren't usually appreciated."

Seven months after going public, LeSesne still spends a lot of time answering e-mail queries (she has received over 1,000), but being a poster girl for transsexuality isn't her idea of a career. "More than any other scene, jungle is about the music; most of the songs don't even have lyrics," she says. "Male, female, or something else completely, like an alien or something—why should it matter?"

As LeSesne leaves Jungle Sky's offices, Eric Holt is trying to solve *his* "Woman" problem by indulging in a little sex-change surgery himself. Scissors in hand, a pile of *Quality Rolls* posters in front of him, he's methodically snipping away the offending bottom inch of each placard. By the time he's done, there won't be a trace of woman left.


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Misrepresentation?

L-Boogie bogarts bylines, musicians claim

On November 19, in the U.S. District Court in Newark, N.J. (just as this issue of VIBE was going to press), four musicians filed suit against Lauryn Hill, claiming they had a hand in the writing or production of all 14 tracks on the star's triple-platinum solo debut, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (Ruffhouse/Columbia, 1998). They say they were not credited or compensated appropriately.

The four plaintiffs are Vada Nobles, head of the Newark-based production company New Ark Entertainment, twin brothers Tejumold Newton and Johari Newton, and Rasheem Pugh. The latter three are, or were at one time, signed to New Ark.



Legal hassles...kind of a drag

"This claim is without any merit whatsoever," says a spokesman for Hill's lawyers.

The album's notes credit Hill with producing, writing, arranging, and performing *Miseducation* in its entirety. On the album's back cover, Nobles receives additional producing credit on one track, Johari Newton gets additional lyrical contribution credit on two tracks, and Tejumold Newton receives additional musical contribution credit on one.

The complaint, though, breaks down the authorship of every song on the album by percentage and details the production contributions of the four plaintiffs. For example, the plaintiffs claim to have written 75 percent of "Everything Is Everything" and call for full production credit on "Lost Ones." The 50-page document outlines their demands for reimbursement and carries accusations of "exploitative practices," "insidious schemes," and "sinful falsehoods" against Hill and her record company codefendants.

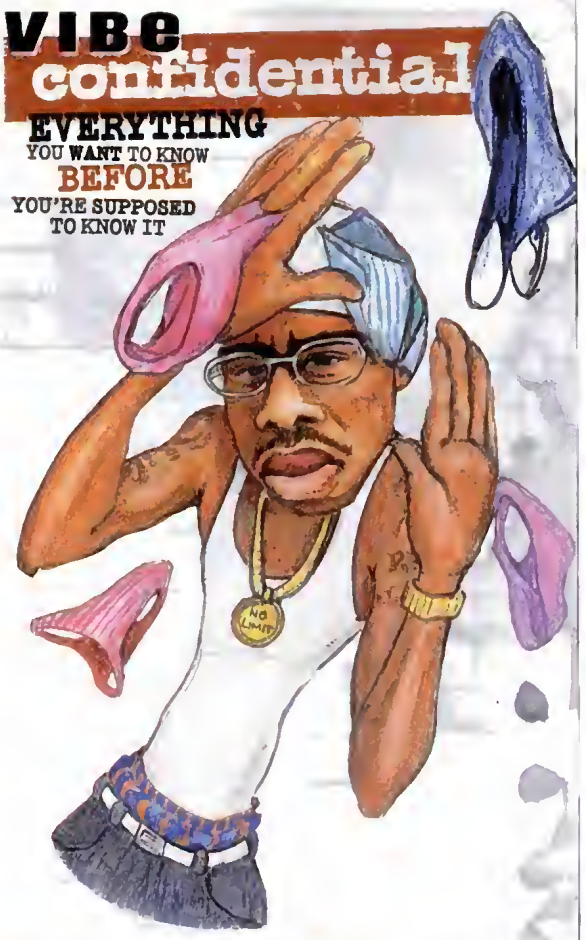
"This claim is without any merit whatsoever," says Dan Klores, a spokesman for Hill's lawyers. "[The complainants] were appropriately credited for their contributions on the album. This is an attempt to take advantage of Lauryn's success, and it will be dealt with in the courts."

According to the complaint, *Miseducation* was conceived jointly with Hill during hours of lyric "sparring sessions" over raw tracks created by the four plaintiffs in Hill's South Orange, N.J., home studio. But before the album's August 25 release, the working relationship "deteriorated into an attempt by defendant Hill to steal the product of the plaintiff's musical creativity and claim sole credit for the work."

The complaint describes an episode, a group prayer circle, where everyone agreed to work together as a "creative team." According to the document, Hill told the plaintiffs that they would share coproducer and cowriter credits and royalties on the album. When Nobles asked whether they should sign a written agreement, though, Hill allegedly said that wasn't necessary. The plaintiffs' lawyers say that there is a precedent for upholding oral contracts in New Jersey courts (of course, the plaintiffs will have to prove the allegations).

"It's an intricate thing," says Ché Guevara, listed as coproducer on one song from *Miseducation*. "With Lauryn, it is always a situation where you have a melting pot—different people contribute different ideas and she comes in and decides what she wants...[in such a situation] people contribute an idea that they might not be given proper credit for." Guevara refused to comment on the lawsuit itself.

"Nobody says Lauryn has *no* talent," says Peter C. Harvey, the plaintiff's legal representation. "Or that we have *all* the talent. Just give us co-credit." *Michael Rey*



LAURYN HILL: MARC BAPTISTE/OUTLINE; ILLUSTRATION BY MEGAN BARNES

Y'know, it is *truly* a hard knock life for **VC**. After last month's **VC** "Hot Executives" piece de résistance, we are the toast (and the roast) of the town. But don't hate **VC** cuz we're right, love **VC** cuz we're *so wrong*! Having just left from dinner with Mariah, Janet, and Whitney at N.Y.C.'s Mr. Chow (Okay, fine, so we were all at separate tables...they were close enough to eavesdrop on!), **VC** has the dish to fulfill your wish. Some might be wondering how, after Afeni Shakur won the rights to all of her son's unreleased material, there are four *new* songs on Death Row's *Tupac's Greatest Hits* CD. Well, **VC** has heard that Jimmy Iovine, cofounder of Interscope Records, maintains a close relationship with both Ms. Shakur and incarcerated Death Row CEO Suge Knight, and that the *Greatest Hits* album was the result of a meeting between the three. Is this the first step toward a reconciliation between Pac's mother and Suge, the man she sued for a reported $50 million in 1997? Only **VC** can say for sure. . . . Now, **VC** has little use for love personally (although we have been known to get down on the gossip couch for that exclusive scoop), but we have no problem saying that the lanky Louisiana lovechile Silkk the Shocker gets our vote for Most Eligible Bachelor in Hip Hop. Master P's dreamy little bro told **VC** himself that he's had lovestruck ladies throw their panties at him—without warning! Maybe Silkk will find him a Eastern Block hottie while he's filming his upcoming "urban action" film in the Slovak Republic. Silkk plays the romantic lead in this movie, tentatively titled *Corrupt*, brought to you by the folks behind straight-to-video flicks like *Postmortem* (Filmwerks, 1998) with Charlie Sheen and *Mean Guns* (1997) with Ice-T and Christopher Lambert. Feelin' kinda skeptical? Well, so is **VC**. . . . But, as always, this is all off the record, strictly on the Q.T., and of course, very hush hush.

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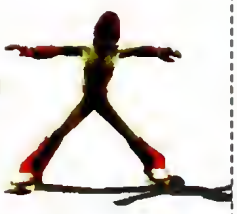


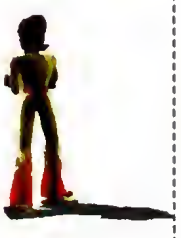
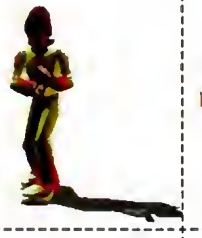


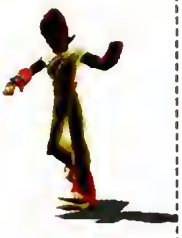












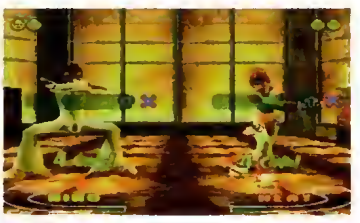


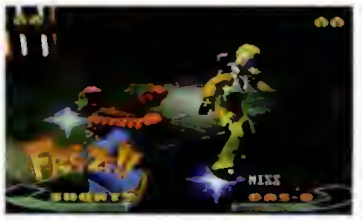



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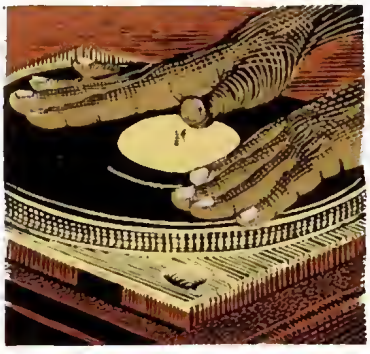


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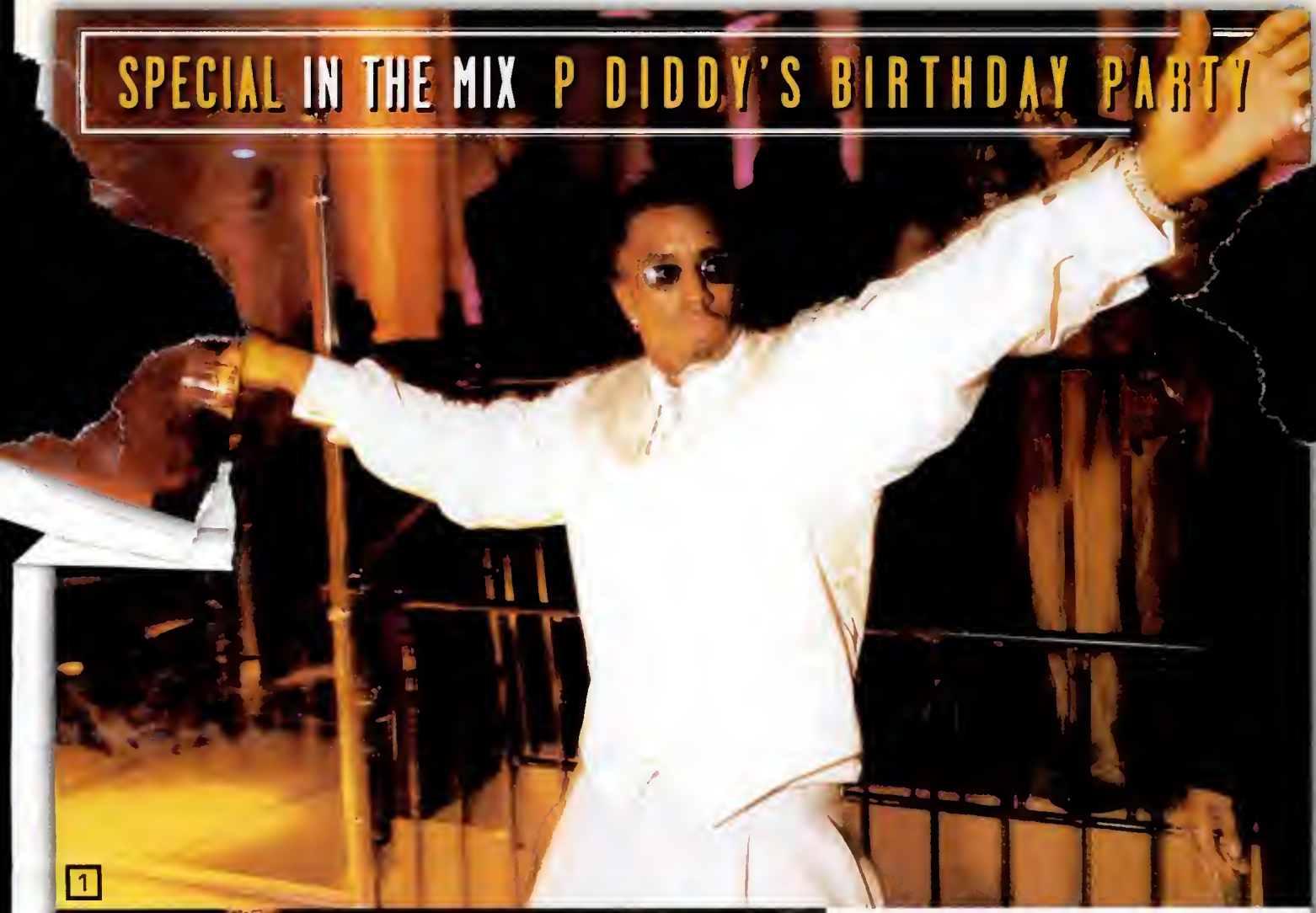
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SPECIAL IN THE MIX P DIDDY'S BIRTHDAY PARTY



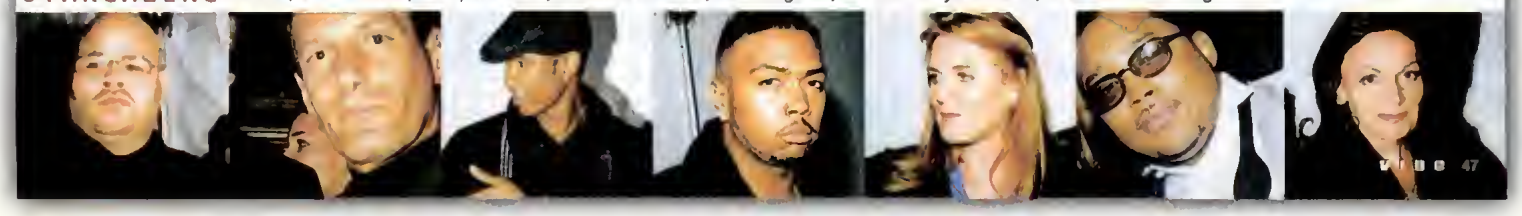


On November 4, Sean "Puffy" Combs invited 1,200 VIPs to celebrate his 29th birthday at Manhattan's illustrious Cipriani Wall Street restaurant. "It was like being an extra in a fabulous high-budget video," says David Watkins, president and CEO of ICON Lifestyle Marketing, organizers of the $600,000 bash. The set was complete with an elevated, illuminated dance floor with a silver PD logo at the center built by Stamford Tent and Frost Lighting. Within an hour, Cipriani reached its 1,000-person capacity and was forced to close its doors. Some of Hollywood's finest, including Tyra Banks, Minnie Driver, Lenny Kravitz, and Mark Wahlberg, reportedly had difficulty getting in and decided to bounce. But for those who were lucky enough to get past the velvet rope, it was *all* good. "People partied like it was 1999," says one industry insider. No doubt about it, the Puffster's unstoppable. *Kenya N. Byrd*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLINE TOREM-CRAIG AND ALEX TEHRANI

1. **A victorious Puffy asks, *So what I'm gonna do now?***
2. **Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott makes it hot.**
3. **Tyson Beckford reminds us that pimpin' ain't easy.**

STARGAZING Fat Joe; Michael Bolton; Usher; Timbaland; The Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson; FUBU CEO Daymond John; Diane Von Furstenberg



SPECIAL IN THE MIX P DIDDY'S BIRTHDAY PARTY













4. *The View* cohost Star Jones takes mental notes from go-go dancers. 5. Chris Rock sneaks in through the back entrance after a bout with N.Y.C.'s cold. 6. The Bad Boy clique toss it up (clockwise from left: Mase, Junior Mafia's Money L, Lil' Kim's manager, Hilliary Weston, Biggie's former road manager D-Roc, Junior Mafia's Lil' Cease, and Lil' Kim). 7. Busta Rhymes teaches the Waterbed Hev how to cha-cha-cha. 8. Martha Stewart gives PD a few party-planning and gardening tips. 9. Producer Rodney Jerkins, Russell Simmons, and Michael Rapaport share a few laughs. 10. Total—those sexy ladies in red—weren't trippin' at all. 11. 112's smooth Q got his swerve on with stylist Sybil Pennix. 12. Ma Dukes, a.k.a. Ms. Janice Combs, enjoyed the company of the rich and famous Robin Leach. 13. Faith Evans mingles with Lauren Hutton.







STARGAZING Denzel Washington; John Singleton; Don Cornelius with an unidentified honey; Christie Brinkley; MTV's Ananda Lewis and LaFace's Antonio "L.A." Reid; Penny Marshall; Henry "Da Fonz" Winkler



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLINE TOREM-CRAIG (4, 5, 8, 13); WALIK GOSHORN (6, 9, 12); ALEX TEHRANI (7, 10, 11); STARGAZING BY RONNIE WRIGHT (DON CORNELIUS); CAROLINE TOREM-CRAIG



FAITH

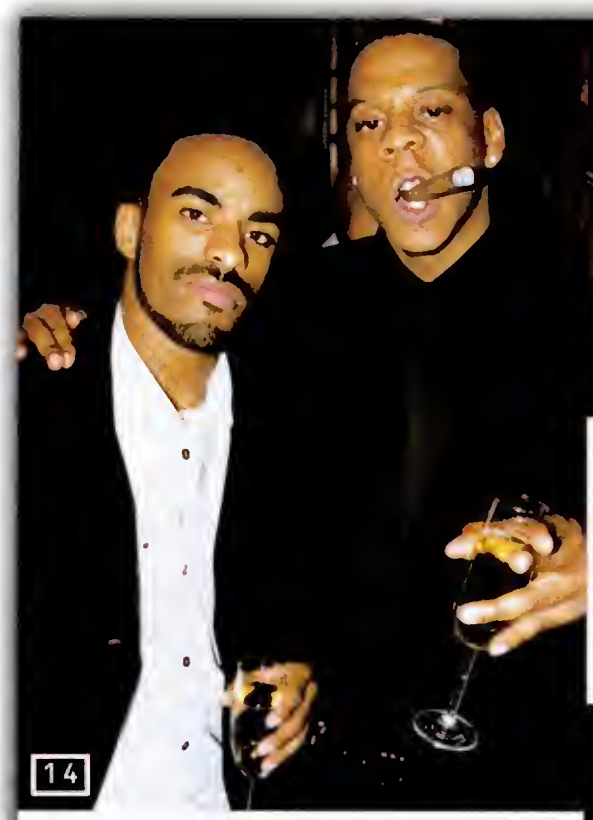
THE NEW ALBUM: KEEP THE FAITH
"LOVE LIKE THIS": THE FIRST SINGLE

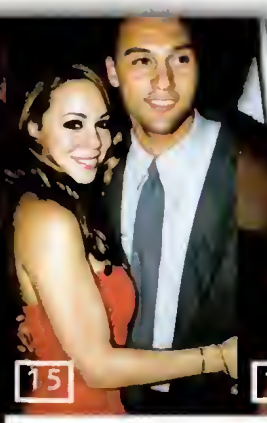
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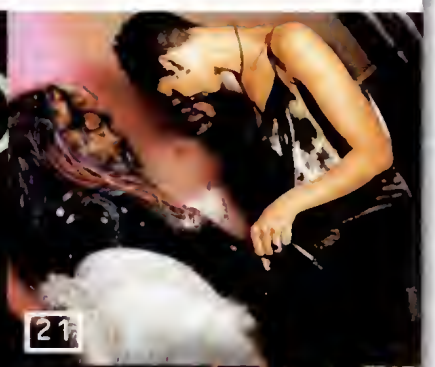




14. Looks like DJ Clue and Jigga are handling life's hard knocks pretty well. **15.** It's a reunion...Mariah Carey slipped away from her date (model Marcus Schenkenberg) to cuddle with ex-boo Derek Jeter. **16.** Actress Paula Jai Parker's cups runneth over. **17.** Definitely a sister's worst nightmare—LisaRaye must've been horrified to find out Parker rocked the same Dolce & Gabbana dress. Too Short, on the other hand, didn't seem to mind that she wasn't sporting a one-of-a-kind. **18.** *Baybahbaybay*! Ms. Voletta Wallace represented for her late son, the Notorious B.I.G.! **19.** L'OREAL PARIS Féria model Janine Green and friend had to be the best-dressed couple there. **20.** Donald Trump seized the opportunity to bond with "The Greatest," Muhammad Ali. **21.** George Clinton waited patiently for his dance. **22.** Puffy stuffed his face! All that politickin' with the stars must've worked up his appetite. My man didn't even wait for the serving knife. (In case you were wondering, the beautiful cake with the silver PD monogram is by N.Y.C.'s Sant Ambroeus.)

SPECIAL IN THE MIX
P DIDDY'S BIRTHDAY PARTY









STARGAZING Stephen Dorff and *Rush Hour* director Brett Ratner; Maria Maples; Malik Sealy; Irina Pantaeva; David Lee Roth; Kevin Costner and Elle MacPherson; Queen Latifah

Other High Rollers (Not pictured): Kenny Anderson•Charli Baltimore•John Bartlett•Beastie Boys•Lara Flynn Boyle•Naomi Campbell•Sam Cassell•Francis Ford Coppola•Clive Davis•Chico DeBarge•John Forte•Al Goldstein•Angie Harmon•Andy and Tommy Hilfiger•Joe•Donna Karan•Kimora Lee•John Leguizamo•Ed Lover•Steven Meisel•Kedar Massenburg•Debi Mazar•Benny Medina•Julia Ormond•Ronald Perelman•Kim Porter•Big Pun•Black Rob•Antonio Sabato Jr.•Arnell Simpson•Marcus Schenkenberg•Susan Taylor•Ivana Trump•Usher•Veronica Webb•Harvey and Bob Weinstein•Brian Williams



PHOTOGRAPHS BY: WALIK GOSHORN (14, 17, 20, 22); LENNY SANTIAGO (15); CAROLINE TOREM-CRAIG (16, 18); ALEX TEHRANI (19, 21); STARGAZING BY: WALIK GOSHORN, MARLA MAPLES AND MALIK SEALY; CAROLINE TOREM-CRAIG

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START

GET BUSY ONE TIME

Bowlegged Lou of Full Force as told to Danyel Smith

DOMEPIECE
FREESTYLE, NO REHEARSAL



Girl / I want to/ Shower you with / Diamonds and pearls." *Creators of classics like "Alice, I Want You Just for Me" (Columbia, 1985), Bowlegged Lou and Full Force don't always get the respect they deserve. But while you're still talking about their Jheri curls, the Force are writing songs for the Backstreet Boys (24 million albums sold worldwide) and 'N Sync (2 million sold in the U.S. alone). The Backstreet song "All I Have to Give" was penned by Lou and his crew—so know that this is no old-school, post-stardom, we're-broke-and-depressed R&B story. Lou is certifiable, though. He writes letters in tiny, horrible handwriting and he giggles like a maniac, but he's making music. Being loyal. Having fun. And did you know Full Force cowrote UTFO's 1984 "Roxanne, Roxanne"? They could have stopped there. But nooo! They press on!*

Full Force started as a singing group with me and my two brothers, Paul Anthony and Brian "B-Fine" George. We were originally known as the Amplifiers. Around 1983–84, there were these break-dancers in our neighborhood—the Kangol Kid and Doctor Ice (of UTFO). And my brother B says, "Yo, man, let's do a rap record." So we got those guys—'cause they were always dancing in our shows, doing the Pop and everything like that—and we went to Select Records. We got those guys in the studio, and our cousins Shy Shy (bass), Baby Gerry (keyboards), and Curt Bedeau (guitar) and we recorded a record called "Hangin' Out." On the B-side was "Roxanne, Roxanne." Nobody was feelin' "Hangin' Out," but they *felt* the B-side. I think Red Alert was one of the first DJs to play the B-side and say that "Roxanne" was the hit. Full Force produced it. Full Force and UTFO cowrote it. (Make sure we put that right…okay, Kangol?) Then it started havin' answer records. Roxanne Shanté was the first one to answer back. She was using our track, which we took care of later. So we came out with "The Real Roxanne" (Select, 1985). And *that* took off. It was just a whole Roxanne saga. Sparky D came out with something. Then you had Roxanne's Parent's "Roxanne's Grandmother" (4Sight, 1985), Little Roxanne's "Roxanne's Little Sister" (Singh, 1985), and 1985's "Roxanne's a Man" (Streetwise), which was done by Ralph Rolle, who's now the drummer for *Showtime at the Apollo*.

Our shows used to be really high-energy and ridiculous. Back in the day, Paul—the nickname they gave him on the block was "Inch," for "Inch High, Private Eye." He was really short, and he didn't like being called Inch so he started working out. Soon everybody in the group was working out, but Paul was the master workout king. Paul used to strip—he'd strip every night. *Does everybody want to see Paul Anthony take it off?!!* He'd be down to just a G-string…they would go mad! Then one time when we were in L.A., I decided to strip too. My strip, of course, was crazy. 'Cause my G-string had electrical lights blinking on and off. It was ridiculous. We always had a great time.

When we first went on the road, people knew our names! "Hey, aaahh! Bowlegged Lou!" Then back at the hotel, girls knocking on the door, "Hello, it's me, Pussy…Open up." I'm like, *damn*. But you know me, I used to sit in my room, and just read my Bible, and have my candle lit while the *other* guys had fun with all the girls!

When we met the Hudlin Brothers, they had a script already written for *House Party* (New Line, 1990). We were supposed to be playing bullies. And the way they described the bullies in the script, they said, "The bullies, with big bowling-ball muscles and drooping Jheri curls, sorta like Full Force." Now, you know at the time, we weren't even wearin' Jheri curls anymore. We was comin' out of it. I think everybody *else* was wearing Jheri curls. Eddie Murphy…everybody had a damn curl. And we still get

My G-string had electrical lights blinking on and off. It was ridiculous.

teased—they make jokes about us and Jheri curls to this day. We were watching *In Living Color* a couple years back and they had this thing: Jim Carrey and Tommy Davidson doin' this thing—some kind of "Jheri Curl Telethon." Tommy Davidson was in a wheelchair [and he had] a Jheri curl. And the first thing Carrey said was, like, "Everybody's been affected by the dreaded Jheri curl disease. Even such public figures as Full Force." But it was funny. Shy Shy was like, "Man, they dissed us." But I love it.

We've been producing, though, and writing. Backstreet Boys, 'N Sync, Wild Orchid. A lot of the white executives are calling us now. And we're going to do another Full Force album.

In 1997 people were surprised when Allure did the cover of our "All Cried Out" (Crave/Sony). I love Allure. I'm an Allure groupie, so I was ecstatic! And it's bigger now than it was back then—and it was a gold seller back when Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam did it in 1986.

Allure invited me to be in another one of their videos, the one for "Last Chance." I play a minister. I ripped the set up, though, 'cause I'm a big prankster and I had my pranks in full force. I like exploding pens. And I put stickers on people's backs. [Ones that say I WAS HANGING OUT WITH BOWLEGGED LOU.] Fake rats…I got a fake rat in a rat trap that actually breathes. It looks like a real rat. It scares the heck out of people. I was doing the movie *Who's the Man?* [1993, New Line, also featuring Salt-N-Pepa] and I put one of my rats underneath Salt's chair when she was getting her makeup done. When she saw that rat she was screaming like crazy. "Aaaggghhh! You play too much," she was saying. Screaming, screaming. Then later in the day she goes, "Hey, Lou, where'd you get that rat? I want one." V


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TUPAC STREET
TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES

by bönz malone

DO NOT ACCEPT



START

Business leaders, kings and queens, even presidents of "superpowers" all insist that the future of mankind rests in the magic of technology. The basic idea is that computers, those miracles of modern science, will solve all of our problems—if we could only fix the damn things before the Y2K crisis hits.

(You'd best know that Y2K stands for Year 2000, when millions of computer chips will simultaneously malfunction because they were not programmed to recognize the date "01-01-00." Governments and corporations all around the world are working overtime to fix this nasty glitch, but nobody really knows what effect Y2K will have.)

I'm impressed with how far technology has advanced over the last fifty years, but not to the point of putting my life in the hands of its inventors. In a computer at a secret location, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recently opened a national deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) database that links a series of DNA banks that have been quietly set up in all fifty states. Inside these banks, the blood of convicted felons will be carefully labeled and preserved.

Law enforcement sources say the new system will be used to catch dangerous criminals, but in Alabama, the DNA samples may also be used for "educational or medical research or development." DNA is the chemical that contains your entire genetic profile, the stuff that makes you who you are, or makes a clone just like you. It can be found in sweat from a T-shirt, saliva from a stamp, a strand of hair, a smudge of blood, a flake of skin, or a stain on an intern's dress.

Presently, only Goodfelonz© like me have to deal with this seemingly unconstitutional violation of being forced to surrender your DNA. "They started out with pariahs—the sex offenders," professor Philip L. Bereano told *The New York Times*. "It's already been enlarged to include other felons and will probably be extended to include everyone, giving elites the power to control 'unruly' citizens." The state of Louisiana takes DNA samples from anyone arrested, not just charged or convicted.

Think about it: If this infringement goes unchallenged, it's only a matter of time before this database expands to include every man, woman, and unborn child. How long before the American Medical Association suggests microchip implants as protection against kidnapping?

The good news is I don't have to wait all day for my dinner. My microwave makes things hot in seconds, and the fax machine makes it a lot easier to send junk mail. Along with all the marvels that visionary scientists and iconoclastic entrepreneurs have brought us comes an insane race to achieve space-age superiority that's left a mark on the foreheads of its admiring slaves.

Technology itself isn't the enemy, but used without G.O.D. (Good Orderly Direction), it compromises our freedom and humility. Maybe it's because computers don't argue. As the dictators of input, we believe we're in complete control of every outcome. We pride ourselves on being ahead of our time, but we always end up where we began so many millennia ago. Dust to dust.

Some of us live in fear of a "New World Order," while others pray for the coming of a "New Order" that the Book of Revelations speaks of. Many await nuclear warfare, when the earth will be totally destroyed along with its present inhabitants. Well, don't forget the old saying "Be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it." Young people have never had a revolution to fight for or against, but our time is coming. And with computers and super-science as potential weapons, we'd better learn to use whatever we got—starting with our brains!

If the government wants to spy on me, then I'll spy on them.

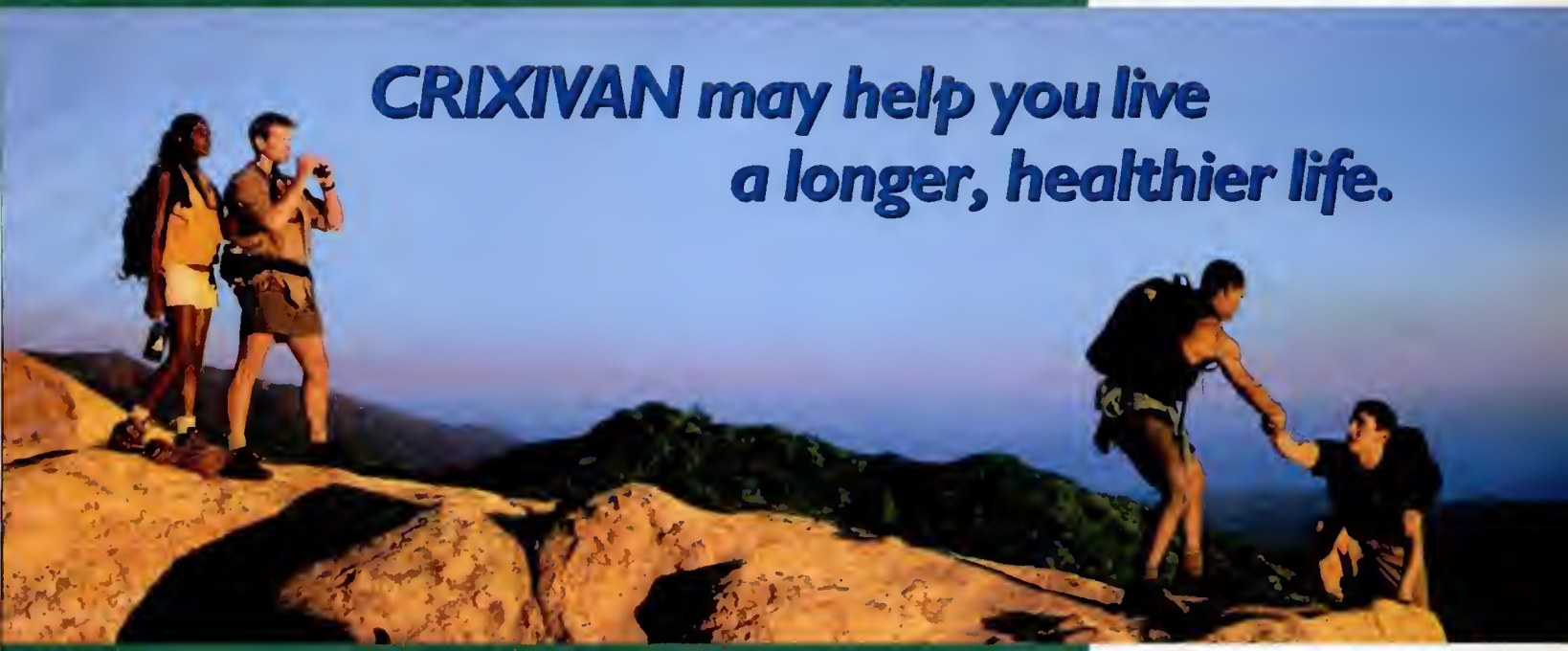
With federal snoops increasing their hardline and cellular wiretapping capabilities, a certain amount of concern is understandable. I figure if the government wants to spy on me, then I'll spy on them. N.Y.C.'s Detective Store International sells night-vision optics, bugs you could put in the light switch, body cameras, fiber-optic video surveillance, and body armor. Invasive? Sure, but it's perfectly legal and increasingly practical in today's world. I'm gathering informative material just like J. Edgar Hoover did, and I'll use it to empower others like myself. The way I see it, we're the last line of defense against governmental sieges on the American way of life.

This morning I got sent for. I arrived at the Bronx county morgue in a blood-colored Town Car to submit my DNA into the FBI book of crime. This private inauguration clearly shows that redemption and rehabilitation aren't possible for Goodfelonz©. As they forever label me a criminal in their index file, I publicly declare before the nation's governing body that I will do any and all that is necessary not to live down to your unconstitutional standards. From this day onward, there will always be bad blood between us.

ILLUSTRATION BY MEEGAN BARNES

If you're HIV+ ...

CRIXIVAN may help you live a longer, healthier life.



CRIXIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIXIVAN can help reduce the chance of illnesses and death associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 T-cell count. Some patients may not experience these effects. CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS.

- **New NIH research showed people taking CRIXIVAN in triple therapy lived longer and experienced fewer opportunistic infections.**

  Recent year-long research conducted by the National Institutes of Health (Protocol ACTG 320) studied over 1,000 patients and confirmed results from another study. The group of patients receiving CRIXIVAN along with 3TC and AZT achieved a reduction in deaths and AIDS-defining illnesses over those taking 3TC and AZT alone. This reduction was significant enough for the NIH to recommend the study be stopped, so that all participants could benefit from the findings. Because the study was ended early, there was insufficient data to determine the statistical impact of CRIXIVAN on survival.

- **CRIXIVAN in triple therapy continues to hold serum viral load down below the limit of detection at the one year mark.**

  In a separate, ongoing landmark study, over 90% of the 31 patients receiving CRIXIVAN, AZT, and 3TC reduced their HIV serum viral load below the limit of detection after 24 weeks (as measured by available tests; the virus may still be present in other organ systems). Importantly, the limited number of patients who chose to stay with the study for longer periods of time maintained these results through the one year mark.

- **CRIXIVAN is generally well tolerated.**

  CRIXIVAN can be taken with a light meal or on an empty stomach. There are side effects associated with protease inhibitors in general and CRIXIVAN in particular. Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN may develop kidney stones. For some, this can lead to more severe kidney problems including kidney failure. Drinking at least 6 glasses of water each day may help reduce the chance of forming a kidney stone. Other side effects reported include rapid breakdown of red blood cells and liver problems. There are some common medications and AIDS-related medications you should not take with CRIXIVAN. Discuss all medications you are taking or plan to take with your doctor. As with other protease inhibitors, increased bleeding in some patients with hemophilia and increased blood sugar levels or diabetes have been reported. Please read the following page for detailed information on side effects and dosing.

Please read the following page for more detailed information about CRIXIVAN.

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Remember to ask your doctor about CRIXIVAN.

CRIXIVAN®
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules

Going the distance.



CRIXIVAN®
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules

Patient Information about CRIXIVAN® (KRIK-sih-van)
for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: indinavir (in-DIH-nuh-veer) sulfate

Please read this information before you start taking CRIXIVAN. Also, you should read the information included with CRIXIVAN each time you receive your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss CRIXIVAN when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups. You should remain under a doctor's care when using CRIXIVAN and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is CRIXIVAN?

CRIXIVAN is an oral capsule used for the treatment of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). CRIXIVAN is a type of HIV drug called a protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor.

How does CRIXIVAN work?

CRIXIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIXIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. CRIXIVAN may not have these effects in all patients.

CRIXIVAN is usually prescribed with other anti-HIV drugs such as ZDV (also called AZT), 3TC, ddI, ddC, or d4T. CRIXIVAN works differently from these other anti-HIV drugs. Talk with your doctor about how you should take CRIXIVAN.

CRIXIVAN has been studied in adults. The safety and effectiveness of CRIXIVAN in children and adolescents have not been established.

How should I take CRIXIVAN?

There are six important things you must do to help you benefit from CRIXIVAN:

1. **Take CRIXIVAN capsules every day as prescribed by your doctor.** Continue taking CRIXIVAN unless your doctor tells you to stop. Take the exact amount of CRIXIVAN that your doctor tells you to take, right from the very start. To help make sure you will benefit from CRIXIVAN, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays." If you don't take CRIXIVAN as prescribed, the activity of CRIXIVAN may be reduced (due to resistance).
2. **Take CRIXIVAN capsules every 8 hours around the clock, *every day.*** It may be easier to remember to take CRIXIVAN if you take it at the same time every day. If you have questions about when to take CRIXIVAN, your doctor or health care provider can help you decide what schedule works for you.
3. **If you miss a dose by more than 2 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time.** However, if you miss a dose by less than 2 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of CRIXIVAN at any one time.
4. **Take CRIXIVAN with water.** You can also take CRIXIVAN with other beverages such as skim or non-fat milk, juice, coffee, or tea.
5. **Ideally, take each dose of CRIXIVAN without food but with water at least one hour before or two hours after a meal.** Or you can take CRIXIVAN with a light meal. Examples of light meals include:
   - dry toast with jelly, juice, and coffee (with skim or non-fat milk and sugar if you want)
   - corn flakes with skim or non-fat milk and sugar

   Do not take CRIXIVAN at the same time as any meals that are high in calories, fat, and protein (for example — a bacon and egg breakfast). When taken at the same time as CRIXIVAN, these foods can interfere with CRIXIVAN being absorbed into your bloodstream and may lessen its effect.
6. **It is critical that you drink at least six 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) throughout the day, every day. CRIXIVAN can cause kidney stones.** Having enough fluids in your body should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (middle to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Does CRIXIVAN cure HIV or AIDS?

CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS. People taking CRIXIVAN may still develop infections or other conditions associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important for you to remain under the care of a doctor. Although CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS, CRIXIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses, including death, associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN may not have these effects in all patients.

Does CRIXIVAN reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

CRIXIVAN has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take CRIXIVAN?

Do not take CRIXIVAN if you have had a serious allergic reaction to CRIXIVAN or any of its components.

What other medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my doctor?

Talk to your doctor if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while you are taking CRIXIVAN. We do not yet know how CRIXIVAN affects pregnant women or their developing babies.
- You are breast-feeding. You should stop breast-feeding if you are taking CRIXIVAN.

Also talk to your doctor if you have:

- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease caused by cirrhosis.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Diabetes
- Hemophilia

Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking or plan to take, including non-prescription medicines.

Can CRIXIVAN be taken with other medications?**

Drugs you should not take with CRIXIVAN:

SELDANE® (terfenadine)	HISMANAL® (astemizole)
VERSED® (midazolam)	HALCION® (triazolam)
PROPULSID® (cisapride)	Ergot medications (e.g., Wigraine® and Cafergot®)

Taking CRIXIVAN with the above medications could result in serious or life-threatening problems (such as irregular heartbeat or excessive sleepiness).

In addition, you should not take CRIXIVAN with rifampin, known as RIFADIN®, RIFAMATE®, RIFATER®, or RIMACTANE®.

Drugs you can take with CRIXIVAN include:

RETROVIR® (zidovudine, ZDV also called AZT)	BIAXIN® (clarithromycin)
TAGAMET® (cimetidine)	isoniazid (INH)
DIFLUCAN® (fluconazole)	ORTHO-NOVUM 1/35® (oral contraceptive)
EPIVIR™ (lamivudine, 3TC)	ZERIT® (stavudine, d4T)
BACTRIM®/SEPTRA® (trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole)	

VIDEX® (didanosine, ddI) — If you take CRIXIVAN with VIDEX®, take them at least one hour apart.

MYCOBUTIN® (rifabutin) — If you take CRIXIVAN with MYCOBUTIN®, your doctor may adjust both the dose of MYCOBUTIN and the dose of CRIXIVAN.

NIZORAL® (ketoconazole) — If you take CRIXIVAN with NIZORAL®, your doctor may adjust the dose of CRIXIVAN.

Talk to your doctor about any medications you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of CRIXIVAN?

Like all prescription drugs, CRIXIVAN can cause side effects. The following is **not** a complete list of side effects reported with CRIXIVAN when taken either alone or with other anti-HIV drugs. Do not rely on this page alone for information about side effects. Your doctor can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN developed kidney stones. In some of these patients this led to more severe kidney problems, including kidney failure or inflammation of the kidneys. Drinking at least six 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) each day should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (middle to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN have had rapid breakdown of red blood cells (hemolytic anemia) which in some cases was severe or resulted in death.

Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN have had liver problems including liver failure and death. Some patients had other illnesses or were taking other drugs. It is uncertain if CRIXIVAN caused these liver problems.

Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) have occurred in patients taking protease inhibitors. In some of these patients, this led to ketoacidosis, a serious condition caused by poorly controlled blood sugar. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients required adjustments to their diabetes medication. Others needed new diabetes medication.

In some patients with hemophilia, increased bleeding has been reported.

Clinical Studies

Increases in bilirubin (one laboratory test of liver function) have been reported in approximately 10% of patients. Usually, this finding has not been associated with liver problems. However, on rare occasions, a person may develop yellowing of the skin and/or eyes.

Side effects occurring in 2% or more of patients included: abdominal pain, fatigue or weakness, flank pain, feeling unwell, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, acid regurgitation, loss of appetite, dry mouth, back pain, headache, trouble sleeping, dizziness, taste changes, rash, upper respiratory infection, dry skin, and sore throat.

Swollen kidneys due to blocked urine flow occurred rarely.

Marketing Experience

Other side effects reported since CRIXIVAN has been marketed include: abdominal swelling; inflammation of the kidneys; increased fat appearing in areas such as the neck, abdomen, and back; change in skin color; severe skin reactions; hair loss; crystals in the urine; and allergic reactions.

Tell your doctor promptly about these or any other unusual symptoms. If the condition persists or worsens, seek medical attention.



How should I store CRIXIVAN capsules?

- Keep CRIXIVAN capsules in the bottle they came in and at room temperature (59°F-86°F).
- Keep CRIXIVAN capsules dry by leaving the small desiccant "pillow" in the bottle. Keep the bottle closed.

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep CRIXIVAN and all medicines out of the reach of children. If you suspect that more than the prescribed dose of this medicine has been taken, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

This provides a summary of information about CRIXIVAN. If you have any questions or concerns about either CRIXIVAN or HIV, talk to your doctor.

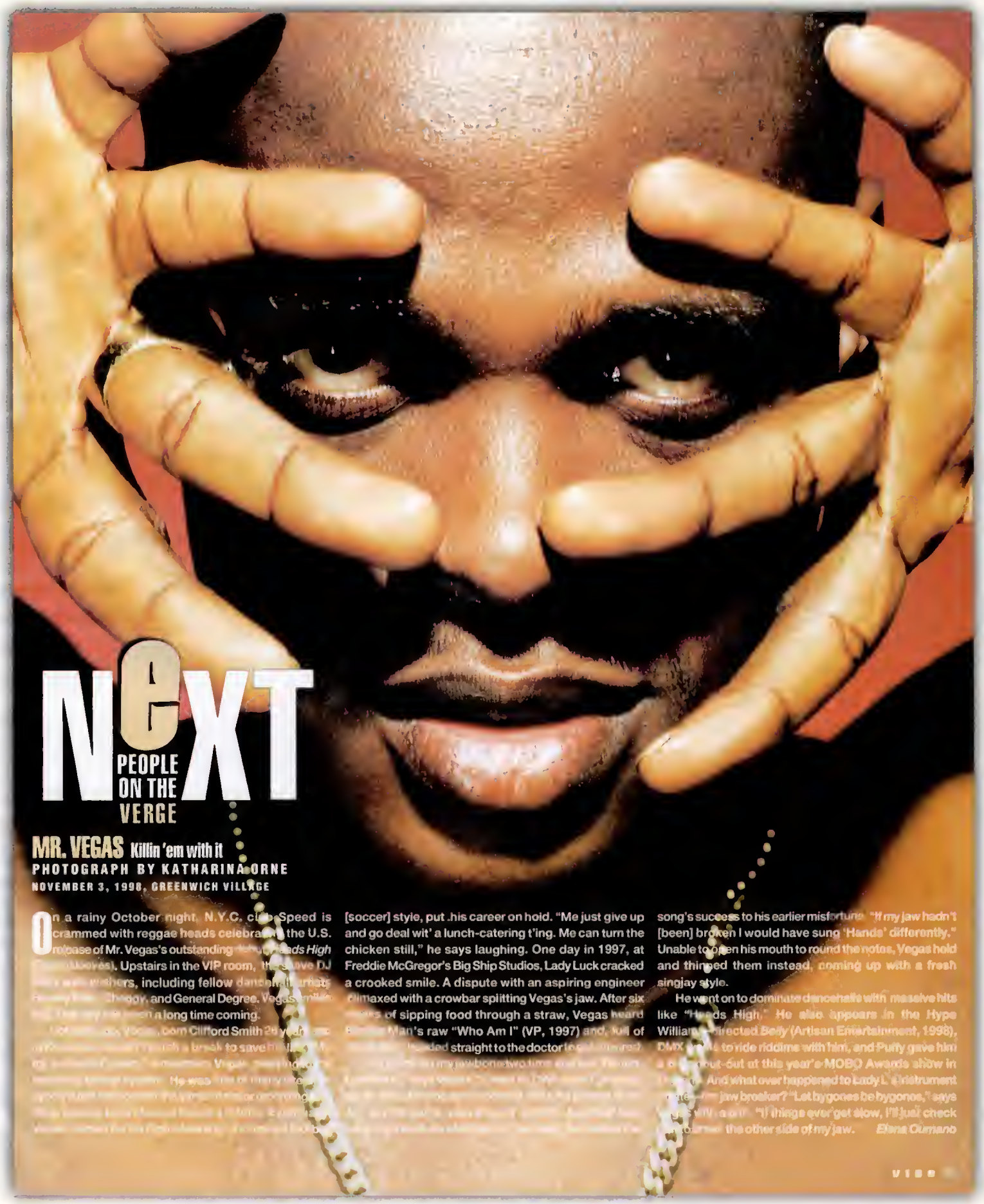
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NEXT

PEOPLE ON THE VERGE

MR. VEGAS Killin 'em with it

PHOTOGRAPH BY KATHARINA ORNE

NOVEMBER 3, 1998, GREENWICH VILLAGE

On a rainy October night, N.Y.C. club Speed is crammed with reggae heads celebrating the U.S. release of Mr. Vegas's outstanding debut, *Heads High* (VP Records). Upstairs in the VIP room, the slave DJ [illegible] with partiers, including fellow dancehall artists Bounty Killer, Cheddy, and General Degree. Vegas's smile [illegible] has only now been a long time coming.

[illegible]as, Vegas, born Clifford Smith 28 years [illegible] a break to save his [illegible] career. Vegas, [illegible] He was [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

NEXT

PEOPLE ON THE VERGE

MEMPHIS BLEEK

Get shorty

PHOTOGRAPH BY EXUM

NOVEMBER 4, 1999, JERSEY CITY

"It costs to floss," says Memphis Bleak. Commandeering his brand-new black 1999 Honde Accord, 20-year-old Malik Cox ("I got into a lot of fights in school over that last name") is in good spirits. And why not? Fuck Brandy—*Bleek* is sittin' on top of the world.

Following the lead of his fellow Mercy Projects, Brooklyn cohort Jay-Z, Roc-A-Fella's futura attraction has risen from street-corner hustler to rap sensation. Coming off his attention-grabbing appearances on Jay's *Vol. 2...Hard Knock Life* (Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam), including the opening blast, "Hand It Down," Bleek is confidant and determined not to make the same mistake he did when stardom first knocked on his door. "After I did 'Coming of Age' on Jay's first album [1996's *Reasonable Doubt*, Freeze/ Roc-A-Fella], I thought I was a superstar. I started slacking and stopped writing rhymes, so my label was like, 'We ain't dealing with shorty no more.'"

For a while, Bleek felt torn between supporting his mother, two sisters, and an older brother by illegal means and going legit with his rap talent. But he decided to try and let his rhyme skills pay the bills. Patching things up with Jigga and company, Bleek's club-friendly contribution to '98's *Streets Is Watching* album, "It's Alright," reenergized his career. "One week before that record hit the stores, Damon Dash (Roc-A-Fella CEO) sat me in his office and was like, 'Yo, I'm telling you, this song is going to put your name out there.' He was right."

Now that Bleak's got a name ("Memphis" stands for Making Easy Money Pimpin' Hoes in Style), his future shines brightly. As he presses buttons on his cellular, making studio arrangements to record his forthcoming debut, he says, "Everybody's lookin' at me like, shorty's coming up, but I feel like I *came* up. And with my album, I want to make everybody respect me for *me*. Not just 'cause I'm down with Jay." Bleek's paid tha cost, now he wants to be the boss.

Elliott Wilson

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NEXT
PEOPLE ON THE VERGE



EMINEM Won't melt in your hands

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN PENG

NOVEMBER 6, 1998, HOLLYWOOD

Ask Eminem about the color of his skin and you might hear: "Unless you want to *fuck* me, why do you care what *I* look like?" The squirrelly rapper Eminem harrumphs. You'd think it would be difficult to offend someone whose debut single is called "Just Don't Give a Fuck" (Aftermath/Interscope), but Eminem's sore spot is throbbing: "I get offended when people say, 'So, being a white rapper...and growing up white... after being born white... it's all I ever hear!" This is the anger of a kid who grew up as Marshall Mathers (hence the "M and M") in a single-parent, inner-city Detroit home. The kind of kid who rolled up his pajama bottoms to make them look like shorts. This kind of upbringing has been channeled into Eminem's *Clockwork Orange*–like alter ego, "Slim Shady." It's also the title of his debut album, to be released this spring.

The journey toward *Slim Shady* began over a year ago, when Em, now 24, sent his demo to Interscope Records. The tape somehow ended up on the floor of CEO Jimmy Iovine's garage, where it was rescued by West Coast landmark Dr. Dre. Dre signed Em, a modern-day hip hop Sid Vicious, to his Aftermath imprint and then decided to include him on Dre's upcoming, tentatively titled album, *Chronic 2000*. "People say Dre fell off," Em says, "but that's the wrongest assumption I know. We were working last night—and I admit it, I was high—but I was walking around yelling, I'm a fan again!"

Those kind of loving feelings are few and far between for Eminem. The mention of "Bonnie and Clyde," [illegible] track on which Em [illegible] about killing his baby's mama [illegible] in the gonzoid tradition of [illegible] and kickers like Ted Nugent. "[illegible] es! [One] fucked up and it [illegible] at girls as sluts," Em snarls, [illegible] arm, which has the name of [illegible] daughter, Hailey Jade, tattooed on it. "A lotta girls ain't gonna like my shit, but once again, *I just don't give a fuck*." Em: abominable or misunderstood? You be the judge.

Peter Relic

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19 BEST singles OF 1998

99 BEST love songs OF ALL TIME

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you've dedicated to folks on the radio. Songs you've made demented love to, songs you've sobbed through, songs you've wailed with your friends—girl and boy.

These songs remind us that an exquisite love affair can last for just those eternal six hours that fall three before and three after midnight. The paraphernalia of romance is gaudy in the face of clear-eyed desire. No roses, no candlelight—a song, like R. Kelly's "Your Body's Callin' " (1993), the Artist's "Do Me, Baby" (1981), or the Dave Matthews Band's "Crash Into Me" (1996), is the only flourish necessary for such a sweet, furious moment.

But then there's love: the thing we're forever trying to figure out. The thing that is either consuming us or making us better or simultaneously causing every square inch of the world to be a little more thrilling and a little more calm. In joy and in pain we turn to songs like the Gap Band's "Outstanding" (1982), New Edition's "Is This the End?" (1983), or Minnie Riperton's "Memory Lane" (1979). They are salve, these songs. Lighter fluid. A warm, unclouded sea. Hell on the devil's birthday. Like real love, these songs are a two-way street.

We started out with, like, 500 of them. Then we asked ourselves: Does the song express intense love or desire? Does it inspire emotion? Is there musical merit? Do we love it enough to play it, like Aaron Hall sings in Guy's 1988 "Piece of My Love," over and over and over and over again? Do we know most of the lyrics—even the ad libs—by heart? Does the song matter? Does it make life better?

At some points, we got kinda concerned, like, Are these really *the greatest love songs of all time*? And then we realized: This is us, baby! This is WE. *Some* of these joints may be your daddy's love songs—11 are from the '60s, 22 from the '70s, 39 from the '80s, 27 from the '90s—but this 99 right here? They are the greatest love songs of *our* time. Read on, I know you'll feel me. Then check out the 19 best singles of 1998. All the jams that made last year one of the best in music history.

Danyel Smith

99 BEST love songs OF ALL TIME

99. "Weak"
SWV

ALBUM: *It's About Time* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Brian Alexander Morgan **STATS:** RCA, 1992 ❤ "I get so weak in the knees / I can hardly speak / I lose all control." You *know* it's true love when the mere *sight* of a lover renders you completely helpless.

98. "Lady in My Life"
Michael Jackson

ALBUM: *Thriller* **WRITER:** Rod Temperton **PRODUCER:** Quincy Jones **STATS:** Epic, 1982 ❤ Forget about Bubbles the chimp and Emmanuel Lewis because in this ultrasweet tune, Michael's got only one awesome thing on his mind: "You'll always be the lady in my life."

97. "Someday We'll Be Together"
Diana Ross & the Supremes

ALBUM: *Cream of the Crop* **WRITERS:** Harvey Fuqua, Johnny Bristol, Jack Beavers **PRODUCERS:** Lamont Dozier, Brian Holland **STATS:** Motown, 1969 ❤ The violin crescendos are saccharine, but when Diana wails, "I long for you, every night and day," she stops us in our tracks: Damn, why *does* love have to be so painful?

96. "Dr. Feelgood"
Aretha Franklin

ALBUM: *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You* **WRITERS:** Aretha Franklin, Ted White **PRODUCER:** Jerry Wexler **STATS:** Atlantic, 1967 ❤ The ultimate no-nonsense, in-love-with-his-sweet-lovemaking song. Rugged-raw and still romantic as hell.

95. "Make It Last Forever"
Keith Sweat f/Jacci McGhee

See pullout at right.

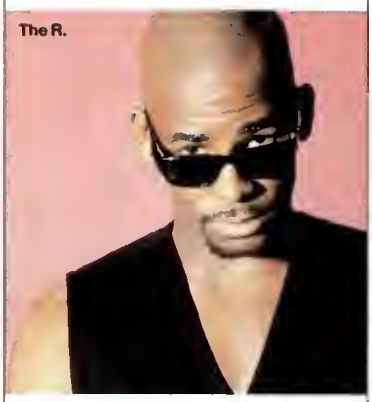
94. "I Love Me Some Him"
Toni Braxton

ALBUM: *Secrets* **WRITERS:** Andrea Martin, Gloria Stewart, Soul Shock **PRODUCERS:** Soul Shock, Karlin **STATS:** LaFace, 1996 ❤ "Another man will never do." The song is gorgeous, but mostly we love it because it's nice to hear Toni breathing and sounding happy for a change.


Toni

93. "It Seems Like You're Ready"
R. Kelly

ALBUM: *12 Play* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Robert Kelly **STATS:** Jive, 1993 ❤ There's nothing like a man telling a woman when


The R.

she's ready to have sex. But then again, who could do that better than R. Kelly?

92. "Distant Lover"
Marvin Gaye

ALBUM: *Let's Get It On* **WRITERS:** Marvin Gaye, Gwendolyn Fuqua, Sandra Greene **PRODUCERS:** Marvin Gaye, Ed Townsend **STATS:** Motown, 1973 ❤ Marvin wraps his whisper, his growl, and his sweet, delicate falsetto around this—his most shamelessly sentimental song.

91. "All My Life"
K-Ci & JoJo

ALBUM: *Love Always* **WRITER:** JoJo Hailey **PRODUCERS:** Rory Bennett, JoJo Hailey **STATS:** MCA, 1997 ❤ Love has always been their forte: "All my life / I prayed for someone like you / And I thank God / That I finally found you." The two voices of Jodeci sound sweeter than ever.

90. "Soon as I Get Home"
Babyface

ALBUM: *Tender Lover* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds **STATS:** Solar, 1989 ❤ Sorry, fellas: After Babyface promised he'd "pay [a girl's] rent, wash [a girl's] clothes, and cook [a girl's] dinner, too," that candy 'n' flowers thing never felt quite as fly.

89. "Whenever, Wherever, Whatever"
Maxwell

ALBUM: *Maxwell's Urban Hang Suite* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** Stuart Matthewman, MUSZE **STATS:** Columbia, 1996 ❤ Maxwell *blesses* your ears with this divine aria. He's a lyrical love *deus*, giving you breath that he breathes. You? You're wanton, ever ready to worship—"whenever, wherever, whatever."

88. "Happy"
Surface

ALBUM: *Surface* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** David Conley, David Townsend, Bernard Jackson **STATS:** Columbia, 1987 ❤ "You're all I need in my life... / Only you can make me happy." Joy is the only true measure of success. And if someone's presence adds this to your life, consider yourself filthy rich.

87. "At Last"
Etta James

See pullout on page 65.

86. "Show Me"
Glenn Jones

ALBUM: *Finesse* **WRITER:** La Forrest Cope **PRODUCERS:** La Forrest Cope, Steve Horton, Wayne Brathwaite **STATS:** RCA, 1983 ❤ The urgency in Glenn's voice borders on burning desperation: "Show me what I gotta do / And baby if you love me / I'll do anything for you." Let the show begin.

85. "Rock Me Tonight (For Old Times Sake)"
Freddie Jackson

ALBUM: *Rock Me Tonight* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Paul Laurence **STATS:** Capitol, 1985 ❤ The first breakup never lasts. You meet with your ex to get a few things off your chest and then, *bam!* "You look so fine / You blow my mind all over again."

84. "Something He Can Feel"
Aretha Franklin

ALBUM: *Sparkle* **WRITER:** Curtis Mayfield **PRODUCERS:** Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield **STATS:** Atlantic, 1976 ❤ Sometimes the only love he can feel is warm hands under his shirt, breath on his neck, and a slow lick down his back. So, like Aretha, you'd best do it well.

83. "In My Bed (remix)"
Dru Hill

ALBUM: Maxi CD **WRITERS:** Ralph Stacy, Stanley Brown **PRODUCER:** Jermaine Dupri **STATS:** Island, 1997 ❤ Torment! Betrayal! And the freshest remix since Puff's for Craig Mack's 1994 "Flava in Ya Ear."



95

Keith Sweat f/Jacci McGhee
"Make It Last Forever"

ALBUM: *Make It Last Forever* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** Keith Sweat, Teddy Riley **STATS:** Elektra, 1988

The come-hither harmonies, 808 snare kick, Scritti Politti–style synths, and, of course, the essential drum-machine cowbell all come together to make Keith Sweat's "Make It Last Forever" the ultimate new jack swing slow jam. But it's also raw emotion that makes it a timeless pillow-talk classic. "The women still scream and yell like it came out yesterday," Sweat says of the song. To keep the lyrics extra real, Sweat says he looked into his own heart. "When I went into the studio to cut the song, I thought about what I would want said to me, and what I would want to say to someone else. And that's what came out. Before two people make love, they want to hear certain things."

While "Make It Last Forever" sounded like brand-new, state-of-the-art soul when it first blasted from radios—and from prom speakers—in 1988, it also had an old-school quality, recalling the classic duets of Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell. "A duet [with vocalist Jacci McGhee, currently of funk/R&B band Family Stand] gives both males and females something to identify with." According to Sweat, the song's enduring legacy often takes human form: "A lot of people told me they had their first kid because of that particular song—it got their groove on. Hearing that always blows my mind." *Matt Diehl*

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Dru Hill give you dramatic love-gone-bad in *perfect* voice. Y'all wanna dance to this?

82. "Lady"
D'Angelo

ALBUM: *Brown Sugar* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** D'Angelo, Raphael Saadiq **STATS:** EMI, 1995 ❤ Jealousy and intense love go hand in hand in this sultry masterpiece. A brothers's scheming eyes on *his* woman. He's paranoid. Lose her or commit. Finally he admits, "You're my lady."

81. "I Like It"
DeBarge

ALBUM: *All This Love* **WRITERS:** Randy DeBarge, El DeBarge **PRODUCERS:** El DeBarge, Iris Gordy, Curtis Anthony Nolen, Raymond A. Crossley **STATS:** Motown, 1982 ❤ From "the way you comb your hair" to the "stylisb clothes you wear," El DeBarge



loved everything about you, girl. And he sent chills up everybody's spine everytime he hit those classic DeBarge high notes.

80. "You Put a Move on My Heart"
Tamia

ALBUM: *Q's Jook Joint* **WRITER:** Rod Temperton **PRODUCERS:** Quincy Jones, Tamia Washington, Brenda Richie **STATS:** Qwest/Warner Bros., 1995 ❤ If Tamia never sang another word, it would be okay. The pause before the final "You put a *move* on me!" is what love is about: the calm before the storm.

79. "Send For Me"
Atlantic Starr

ALBUM: *Radiant* **WRITERS:** Sam Dees, Ron Kersey **PRODUCER:** James Carmichael **STATS:** A&M, 1981 ❤ When Wayne Lewis moans, "Put a message in a bottle / Baby," you know it's *on*. The ultimate I'm-here-waiting-come-back-immediately song. Eighties love-soul at its most yearning.

78. "This Time I'll Be Sweeter"
Angela Bofill

ALBUM: *Angie* **WRITER:** Patrick Grant, Gwen Guthrie **PRODUCERS:** Dave Grusin, Larry Rosen **STATS:** GRP, 1979 ❤ "Darling / Can't you see / What losing you / Has done to me?" All newfound humility, Bofill is boldly apologetic in this song. She sings with what love is full of: hardcore honesty.

77. "Saturday Love"
Alexander O'Neal and Cherelle

ALBUM: *High Priority* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** James Harris III, Terry Lewis **STATS:** Tabu, 1986 ❤ If you need a lesson in love, after hearing this soaring jam you'll understand that "Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Satur-DAY love" is the best kind.

76. "Ready or Not"
After 7

ALBUM: *After 7* **WRITER:** Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds **PRODUCERS:** De'Rock, Kayo **STATS:** Virgin, 1989 ❤ Bless them for figuring out that talk is *extremely* cheap: "I'll give you the world / And all that you ask for / ...Cause girl I love you more than words can show."

75. "I Will Always Love You"
Whitney Houston

See pullout on page 66.

74. "Say Yes"
The Whispers

ALBUM: *Love Is Where You Find It* **WRITER:** Nicholas Caldwell **PRODUCER:** Leon Sylvers **STATS:** Solar, 1982 ❤ The Whispers always knew exactly what the girls were dreaming about. "If you just say yes / I'll do the rest." If only it were that simple in reality. Always amazing, the Scott twins are in especially rare form in this sexy jam.

73. "Something"
The Beatles

ALBUM: *Abbey Road* **WRITER:** George Harrison **PRODUCER:** George Martin **STATS:** Apple, 1969 ❤ Who would've thought George Harrison would author the Beatles' greatest ode to romance? But by 1969, John was too angry—and Paul was too dead.



72. "Cupid"
112

ALBUM: *112* **WRITERS:** Arnold W. Hennings, Daron Jones, Courtney Douglas Sills, Quinnes Daymond Parker, Michael Marcel Keith, Marvin E. Scandrick **PRODUCERS:** Arnold W. Hennings, Daron Jones **STATS:** Bad Boy, 1996 ❤ Hypnotic hand claps mixed with smoothed-out guitar set the tone for the four southern, harmonizing boos. One pleads: "I'd rather die before I let you go!" Cupid *really* doesn't lie!

71. "Cupid"
Sam Cooke

ALBUM: *The Best of Sam Cooke* **WRITER:** Sam Cooke **PRODUCERS:** Hugo and Luigi **STATS:** RCA, 1962 ❤ Violins float like golden halos, a guitar strums like harp strings. A French horn blows soft as heaven's clouds. And of course, Sam Cooke's songs alone could've filled this list.

70. "One Love"
Massive Attack

ALBUM: *Blue Lines* **WRITERS:** Grant Marshal, Andrew Vowels, Rob Delnaja, C.J. Williams **PRODUCERS:** Grant Marshal, Andrew Vowels, Rob Delnaja, Johnny Dollar **STATS:** Virgin, 1991 ❤ From the ambient throb of the first notes you're sucked into this stirring declaration of monogamy. Massive's stark industrial dub arrangement make the song's romantic claims seem radical.

69. "Let's Chill"
Guy

See pullout on page 68.

68. "A Song for You"
Donny Hathaway

ALBUM: *Donny Hathaway* **WRITER:** Leon Russell **PRODUCERS:** Jerry Wexler, Arif Mardin **STATS:** Atco, 1971 ❤ "I've been so many places in my life and time... / Acted



87

Etta James
"At Last"

ALBUM: *At Last* **WRITER:** Mack Gordon, Harry Warren **PRODUCER:** Riley Hampton **STATS:** Argo, 1961

Jamesetta Hawkins, a chubby girl with curly red hair, was plucked out of a San Francisco audience by Johnny Otis to suffer chitlin' circuit rhythm and blues tours. "We were living in New York City, in a scummy hotel, but that was cool," Etta James recalls. "I'd turned 21, and I felt like I was really a woman. We had a Wurlitzer electric piano in our room, and I said, 'Let's do some standards.' We'd run through them day in and day out." One of those was "At Last."

"It's a real singer's song," James says of the tune that was putty in the hands of jazz legends like Dinah Washington. "That song made me feel...just in love with life."

At Chicago's Chess studios, 1960, the jazz standard was quickly transformed into a true pop classic. Etta, with a voice not long from church and draped in Riley Hampton's Gershwin-esque string arrangement, created a commercially successful R&B masterpiece. Etta's opening sigh, "At last / My love has come along," is indelible and assured.

This song, "a national anthem for lovers," as James puts it, is "a middle America kinda thing." It's a perennial wedding song—a glorious testament to a wish come true. Jaguar would tap into its well of sentiment and air of luxuriance for a successful ad campaign; Dustin Hoffman would learn to dance to its strains in 1988's *Rain Man* (United Artists).

And Etta James would live to become as much of a legend as the song she recorded almost 40 years ago. Of that moment, James remembers, "I tried to *look* like that song." *At last... / My lonely days are over / And life is like a song.* And it still is.

Mark Schwartz



Whitney Houston

"I Will Always Love You"

ALBUM: Soundtrack for the movie *The Bodyguard* **WRITER:** Dolly Parton **PRODUCER:** David Foster **STATS:** Arista, 1992

Is there a person who *hasn't* wailed along in heartbroken empathy with the climactic closing chorus of Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You"? Some experiences are just undeniably universal. Since its release in 1992 by way of the megasoundtrack for the movie *The Bodyguard* (Warner Bros.), it has become one of the best-selling singles of all time. In fact, more than 15 million Americans own a copy of the dewy, Dolly Parton–penned ballad. Talk about striking a responsive chord.

What was it about this jam that took us all there? Simply put, it soared with brutally vivid emotion and a bravura vocal performance.

It started from a moment so soft and painfully intimate it was as if Miss Whitney was thinking, not singing, the lines, "If I should stay, I'll only be in your way." As David Foster's meticulous, almost orchestral arrangement unfolded, these inner thoughts took on a more tangible, relatable shape. Even if you'd never been a fan of Houston's signature histrionics, you were resting in the palm of her hand as her remarkably measured performance blossomed with the aching words: "But above all this / I wish you love." In a masterfully manipulative move, she forced you to relive a moment of loss—and then handsomely repaid you by providing a flash of cleansing catharsis. *Larry Flick*

75

out my life on stages... / But we're alone now and I'm singing this song to you." Seriously, have you *ever* heard anything more romantic?



67. "Simply Beautiful"

Al Green

ALBUM: *I'm Still in Love With You* **WRITER:** Al Green **PRODUCERS:** Willie Mitchell, Al Green **STATS:** Hi, 1972 ❤ Al Green, his always flawed/flawless voice filled with sex, oozes all over the seductive track. He makes sure she *feels* every word, every moan. Simply beautiful, indeed.

66. "Nite and Day"

Al B. Sure!

ALBUM: *In Effect Mode* **WRITERS:** Albert Joseph Brown III, Kyle Albert West **PRODUCER:** Peter Nydrle **STATS:** Warner Bros., 1988 ❤ How'd he say it? "Making love in the rain is fine." Al B. Sure!'s falsetto hegged and whined, promising like the postman to deliver come hell or high water.

65. "Two Occasions"

The Deele

ALBUM: *Eyes of a Stranger* **WRITERS:** Darnell "Dee" Bristol, Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, S. Johnson **PRODUCERS:** Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, Antonio "L.A." Reid **STATS:** Solar, 1987 ❤ "I only think of you / On two occasions / That's day and night." When you heard that back in 1987, you knew it was time to put your wine cooler down and get *busy*.

64. "Feel the Fire"

Stephanie Mills and Teddy Pendergrass

ALBUM: *Watcha Gonna Do...With My Lovin'?* **WRITER:** Peabo Bryson **PRODUCER:** Kenneth Gamble, Leon Huff **STATS:** 20th Century, 1979 ❤ "I want to *feel* the fire," sings Stephanie. Who cares about tomorrow and all that can possibly go wrong? We love this song because sometimes tonight is the only thing that matters.

63. "Teenage Love"

Slick Rick

ALBUM: *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick* **WRITERS:** Eric Sadler, Hank Shocklee, Ricky Walters **PRODUCERS:** Eric Sadler, Hank Shocklee **STATS:** Def Jam, 1989 ❤ Slick Rick. His look is that of a B-boy Mr. T. So when you hear his smooth-as-Ripple voice bellow, "Don't hurt me again," you realize who the original gentleman-thug is.

62. "Wild Horses"

The Rolling Stones

ALBUM: *Sticky Fingers* **WRITERS:** Mick Jagger, Keith Richards **PRODUCER:** Jimmy Miller **STATS:** Rolling S., 1971 ❤ Guitars like a tear dripping down barbed wire. Harmonies as sad as holding a dying lover's hand. Devotion, though, finds hope in heartbreak. And a promise: "We'll ride them someday."

61. "Bonita Applebum"

A Tribe Called Quest

ALBUM: *People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** A Tribe Called Quest **STATS:** Jive, 1990

TOP FIVE ONE-HIT WONDERS

1. "Hey There Lonely Girl"

Eddie Holman

WRITERS: Bob Sherman, Lee Pockriss **STATS:** ABC, 1970 ❤ "Don't you know this lonely boy loves you," crooned Eddie with a pitch-perfect falsetto. He appealed to our hearts with his humble words and sensitive approach.

2. "Gentle (Can I Be Your Man)"

Frederick

WRITER: G.L.C. Mims **STATS:** Heat Recording and Filmwork, 1984 ❤ You have to remember this one: "I'm in a daze, I'm so confused / Since you have stopped running..." Erick Sermon even "sang" parts of the sweet song on EPMD's 1990 "Who's Booty." A timeless gem.

3. "Written All Over Your Face"

Rude Boys

WRITER: Larry "Bingo" Mercer **STATS:** Atlantic, 1991 ❤ We know what you're wondering. "You don't have to say a word." Where the hell did these Levon wannabes go? Obviously, being a rude boy gets you nowhere fast.

4. "Shake You Down"

Gregory Abbott

WRITER: Gregory Abbott **STATS:** Columbia, 1986 ❤ "I can give you all the lovin' you need..." But we wanna know what happened to all that lovin'. After all, Mr. Abbott was *awesome*! "I shake and I shiver when I know you're near."

5. "Don't Wanna Fall in Love"

Jane Child

WRITER: Jane Child **STATS:** Warner Bros., 1989 ❤ We were attracted more to her wiry, white-girl soul than to the chain that draped from her nose to her ear. This song was super funky and deliciously biting. "Love cuts just like a knife."

❤ Back then, "prophylactics" was a naughty word. And *every* round-the-way girl wished her body measured up to the impossible 38-24-37–Q-Tip's "match made in heaven."

60. "Breakin' My Heart (Pretty Brown Eyes)"

Mint Condition

ALBUM: *Meant to Be Mint* **WRITERS:** Jeffrey Allen, Stokley Williams, Lawrence Waddell, Homer Odell, Kierston Lewis, Ricky Kinchen **PRODUCERS:** Jellybean Johnson, Mint Condition **STATS:** Perspective, 1992 ❤ Stokley Williams *bits* it with hardcore love-me-don't-leave-me: "Quit breakin' my heart / *Sugar*." Plus: fat sax solo. And every time he sings, "Pretty brown eyes," he's either speaking for or talking to you. Yes, *you*.

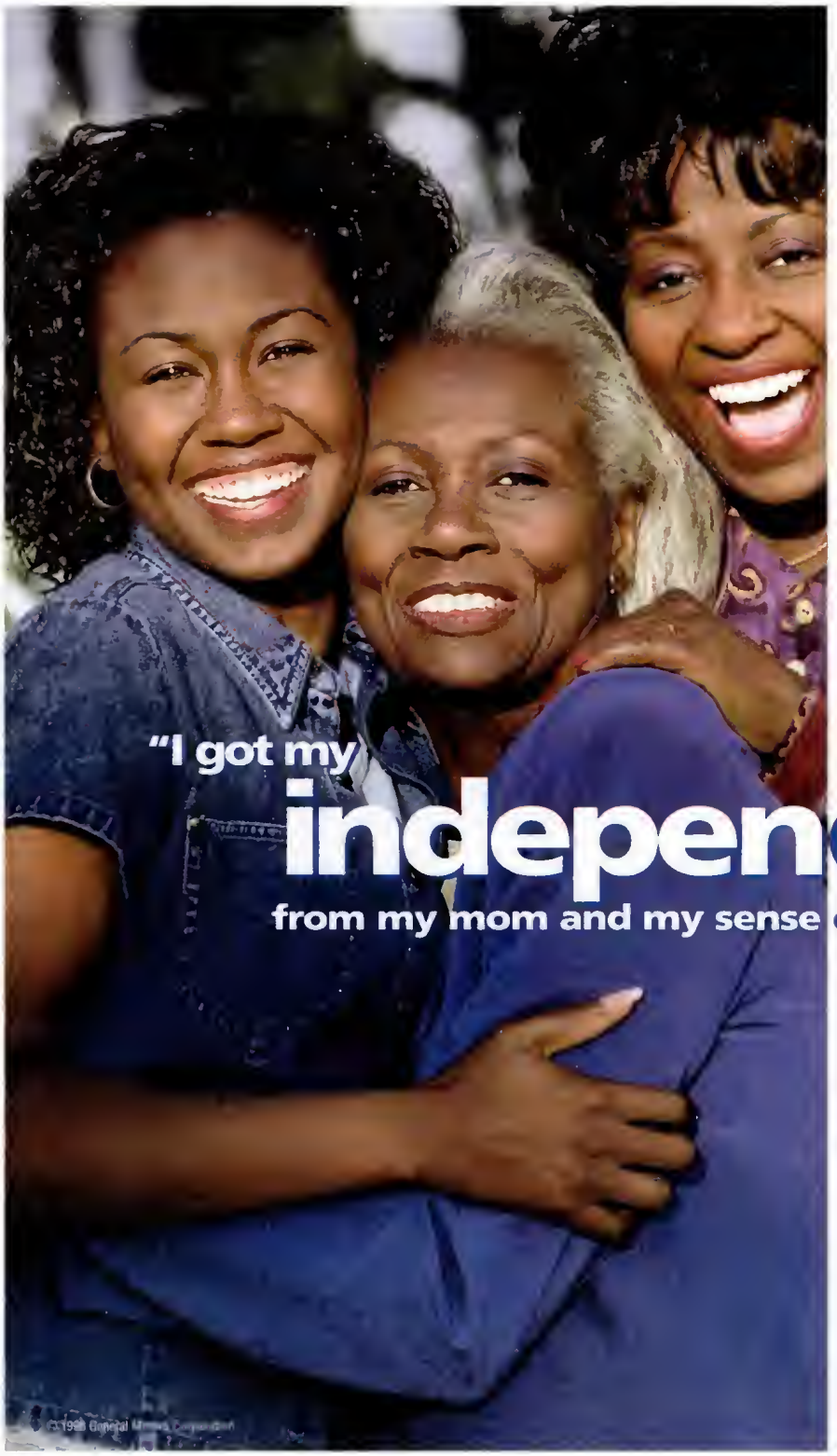
59. "I Don't Want to Do Anything"

Mary J. Blige, f/K-Ci Hailey

ALBUM: *What's the 411?* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** DeVante Swing **STATS:** Uptown/MCA, 1992 ❤ Art invaded real life when Mary and then-lover K-Ci of Jodeci opened their hearts for all to see. But their underlying pain reminded us: Love is not always enough.



WHITNEY HOUSTON: JEFF SLOCOMB/OUTLINE; MARY J. BLIGE: NAOMI KALTMAN/OUTLINE; AL GREEN: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES



"My grandma was a daring young woman. Driving her trusty General Motors car to California. Then driving to New York to enjoy the jazz scene there, that's where she met Grandpa. And Mom had her first business when she was eight...a lemonade stand by the side of a dusty road. I learned all about following my dreams from my mom and grandma. And about the dependability of GM cars. So, when I announced I was heading to California in my new GM car, they knew I would be just fine. And so did I."

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Guy
"Let's Chill"

ALBUM: *The Future* **WRITERS:** Teddy Riley, Bernard Belle, Keith Sweat **PRODUCERS:** Teddy Riley, Aaron Hall, Damion Hall, Bernard Belle **STATS:** MCA, 1990

With two simple words Guy captured the essence of what we all want love to be—relaxed, comforting, and strong. "Let's Chill" takes the notion of love far beyond the perimeters set by lust, infatuation, or one-night-stand passion. Bliss equals spending the weekend on the couch watching a movie, holding hands, or getting a phone call *just because*. "I'm so happy / To have you here / Standing right by my side." Over a gentle melody, Guy appreciates life's simpler things.

Somewhere between Norman Connors's dreamy "You Are My Starship" (1976) and Notorious B.I.G.'s brutally direct "Fucking You Tonight" (1997) lie the romantic sentiments of the average man. That's why "Let's Chill," fueled by Hall's deep, stirring voice, instantly became a classic. From the schoolyard to college dorms, "Let's Chill" was *the* love anthem of a generation looking to express matters of the heart in their own language. "The song was something new. People used to say 'I'm chillin' out,' " says Teddy Riley, who wrote the song about his girlfriend and the life he hoped they would build together. "But they never used to say they were chillin' with their loved one, like, I wanna chill *with* you." Along with cowriters Keith Sweat and Bernard Belle, Riley simultaneously started a new phrase and created a delectable slow jam moment. And just like the precious time spent chillin' with the one you love, this song is to be savored forever.

Ayana D.Byrd

58. "No Sé Tú"
Luis Miguel

ALBUM: *Romance* **WRITER:** Armando Manzanero **PRODUCERS:** Armando Manzanero, Luis Miguel **STATS:** WEA Latin, 1991 ❤ This remake licks Armando Manzanero's ballad like a love-obsessed puppy. Backed by a full orchestra, his voice rises, falls and penetrates, making us wish we'd been there *la otra vez*.

57. "Little Wing"
Jimi Hendrix

ALBUM: *Axis: Bold as Love* **PRODUCER:** Chas Chandler **WRITER:** Jimi Hendrix **STATS:** Reprise, 1968 ❤ It's been said that Jimi wrote this gorgeous offering for his mother. "It's all right, she says, it's all right / Take anything you want from me / Anything."

56. "Love Is a House"
Force M.D.'s

ALBUM: *Touch and Go* **WRITERS:** Gina Foster, Geoff Gurd, Martin Lascelles **PRODUCERS:** Geoff Gurd, Martin Lascelles **STATS:** Tommy Boy, 1987 ❤ "Love's a house / Love's a home / I don't want to be alone / You got the key / Give it to meeeeee." Girls: Weren't you just ready to move in and help TQ activate his Jheri curl? Guys: Weren't you secretly wishing you had a key to give someone?

55. "Heroes"
David Bowie

ALBUM: *Heroes* **WRITERS:** David Bowie, Brian Eno **PRODUCER:** Tony Visconti, David Bowie **STATS:** RCA, 1977 ❤ Fatalistic, ambivalent to the core, but still impossibly romantic. Bowie alternates between cool optimism and ragged despair, making this the most unlikely of love songs.



54. "Love's Train"
Con Funk Shun

ALBUM: *To the Max* **WRITERS:** Michael Cooper, Felton Pilate **PRODUCERS:** Con Funk Shun, Skip Scarborough, Eumir Deodato, Maurice Starr **STATS:** Mercury, 1982 ❤ "If by chance / You let me come over... / Down on my knees / I wanna please you, baby / I'll be your righteous lover." The door is unlocked, baby.

53. "Just to Be Close to You"
The Commodores

ALBUM: *Hot on the Tracks* **WRITER:** Lionel Richie **PRODUCERS:** The Commodores, James Carmichael **STATS:** Motown, 1976 ❤ "Been out there so very long / Trying to find someone just like you." This song melts you with "woh's," shakes you with "sugar, sugars," caresses with "babe, babes." Takes a while, but it is *all* worth the wait.

52. "Love Sponge"
Buju Banton

ALBUM: *Inna Heights* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Buju Banton **STATS:** VP, 1997 ❤ The greatest raggamuffin love song ever. In this disarmingly sweet tribute, love drips slowly, saturating the sponge by virtue of time, delicious time: "With you," Buju sighs, "I'm in no hurry."

51. "Lay Lady Lay"
Bob Dylan

ALBUM: *Nashville Skyline* **WRITER:** Bob Dylan **PRODUCER:** Bob Johnston **STATS:** Columbia, 1969 ❤ A muted cowbell skips a beat, and Bob knows that simple words work best. "His clothes are dirty / But his hands are clean / And you're the best thing / That he's ever seen."

50. "Practice What You Preach"
Barry White

ALBUM: *The Icon Is Love* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Gerald Levert **STATS:** A&M, 1994 ❤ Sexy and audacious, this song is loving truth and sexual dare. Plus, White's sensual growl is, for once, wrapped around something that he himself *didn't* write—and still he evokes true love, unlimited.

49. "Ain't Too Proud to Beg"
The Temptations

ALBUM: *Gettin' Ready* **WRITERS:** Edward Holland Jr., Norman Whitfield **PRODUCER:** Norman Whitfield **STATS:** Motown, 1966 ❤ Only *real* love can force a man to sound as determined as David Ruffin does when he hits first line, "I *know* you wanna leave me / But I refuse to let you go."

48. "Waiting in Vain"
Bob Marley and the Wailers

ALBUM: *Exodus* **WRITER:** Bob Marley **PRODUCERS:** Bob Marley and the Wailers **STATS:** Island, 1977 ❤ "I don't wanna wait in vain for your love" poses the fundamental



lover's question as a forceful statement (slightly softened by Junior Marvin's dream-like guitar solo). What dawta could ask for more?

47. "Come Go With Me"
Teddy Pendergrass

ALBUM: *Teddy* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** Kenneth Gamble, Leon Huff **STATS:** Philadelphia International, 1979 ❤ With a raspy whisper, Teddy longs for that sensual stranger: "Come on and go with me / Come on over to my place." How we savor the insane urgency of instant chemistry. Oh, yeah.

46. "Ribbon in the Sky"
Stevie Wonder

ALBUM: *Stevie Wonder's Original Musiquarium I* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Stevie Wonder **STATS:** Motown, 1982 ❤ How many kisses have been kissed to, how many dances have been danced to, and how much love



GUY: CHRIS CARROLL/OUTLINE BOB MARLEY: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/DAVID BOWIE: LONDON FEATURES/STEVIE WONDER: NEAL PRESTON/OUTLINE



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has been made to this timeless classic? Like Muhammad Ali, it's the greatest.

45. "I Wanna Get Next to You"
Rose Royce

ALBUM: Soundtrack for the movie *Car Wash* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Norman Whitfield **STATS:** MCA, 1976 ❤ Because love–for a guy or a girl–is waiting by the phone, longing for a kiss, hoping for a touch, dreaming, scheming, begging please baby please, "I wanna get next to you."

44. "Just Once"
James Ingram

ALBUM: *The Dude* **WRITERS:** Barry Mann, Cynthia Weil **PRODUCER:** Quincy Jones **STATS:** A&M, 1981 ❤ With his impeccable voice, Ingram perfectly captures the sharp pain felt when you can't be friends with the one you love. "It seems we're always blowin' / Whatever we've got goin'."

43. "The Sweetest Thing"
Refugee Camp All-Stars f/Lauryn Hill

See pullout at right.

42. "Who's Lovin' You"
Jackson 5

ALBUM: *Diana Ross Presents the Jackson 5* **WRITER:** William Robinson **PRODUCERS:** Bobby Taylor, the Corporation **STATS:** Motown, 1969 ❤ Michael might have been too young to understand what he was singing, but the rest of us understand exactly. "Life without love / Is oh so lonely."

41. "Reasons"
Earth, Wind & Fire

ALBUM: *That's the Way of the World* **WRITERS:** Philip Bailey, Charles Stepney, Maurice White **PRODUCER:** Maurice White **STATS:** Columbia, 1975 ❤ "Now / I'm craving your body / Is this real?" From the beginning this track takes you on a warm journey filled with love. Its intoxicating rhythm is simply captivating. A musical aphrodisiac for sure.

40. "Oh Girl"
The Chi-Lites

ALBUM: *A Lonely Man* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Eugene Record **STATS:** Brunswick, 1972 ❤ "Oh Girl / I'd be in trouble if you left me now." Old? Yes. In some ways, very cliché.



Still perfect and true in a zillion ways.

39. "Sunshine"
Alexander O'Neal

ALBUM: *Hearsay* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** James Harris III and Terry Lewis **STATS:** Tabu, 1987 ❤ Love is blinding like the sun, yet everything seems so bright and clear when you're deep in it. O'Neal's phenomenal, often underappreciated voice fairly breaks: "I can't go a day without my sunshine."

38. "Turn Off the Lights"
Teddy Pendergrass

ALBUM: *Teddy* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** Kenny Gamble, Leon Huff **STATS:** Philadelphia International, 1979 ❤ Teddy softly begs her in the beginning–promising candlelight and warm showers. But in the end Teddy stops asking nicely, and *demands* that she "Turn 'em off!" Ah yes: gorgeous darkness.



37. "Cruisin'"
Smokey Robinson

ALBUM: *Where There's Smoke* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** William Robinson **STATS:** Motown, 1979 ❤ We love D'Angelo's cover, but Smokey, as usual, sets the standard. His voice conveys all the placid joy of having no destination and no cares. "I love it when we're cruisin' together."

36. "I'll Make Love to You"
Boyz II Men

ALBUM: *II* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds **STATS:** Motown, 1994 ❤ Full of tenderness and love, this one feels like a dream too good to be true: "Close your eyes / Make a wish / And blow out the candlelight."

35. "Make It Like It Was"
Regina Belle

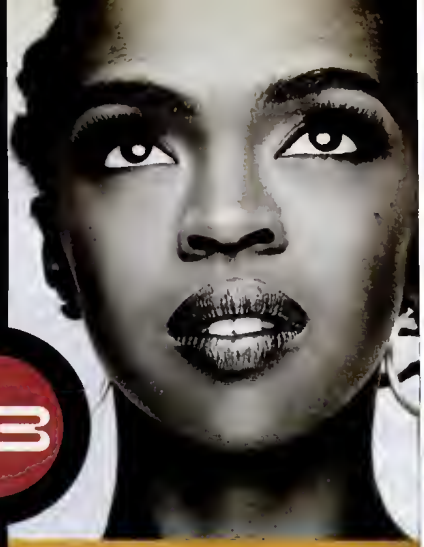
ALBUM: *Stay With Me* **WRITER:** Carvin Winans **PRODUCER:** Nick Martinelli **STATS:** Columbia, 1989 ❤ "I know you're able / To make it like it was..." Regina pleaded in her beautiful, full-lipped prime. With the longing that welled in her voice, you really believed that time would turn back.

34. "What Kind of Man Would I Be"
Mint Condition

ALBUM: *Definition of a Band* **WRITER:** Lawrence Waddell **PRODUCER:** Mint Condition **STATS:** Perspective/A&M, 1996 ❤ Not *everybody* thinks it's cool to cheat. "If we lay down tonight / It won't justify / Throwin' love aside." The song succeeds because the theme is not passion restrained–vocally and musically it's passion let *loose*.

33. "My, My, My"
Johnny Gill

ALBUM: *Johnny Gill* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, Antonio "L.A." Reid **STATS:** Motown, 1990 ❤ The emotions are intense. "I'm so proud to be with you / So proud to



43

Refugee Camp All-Stars f/ Lauryn Hill
"The Sweetest Thing"

ALBUM: Soundtrack for the movie *love jones* **WRITER:** Lauryn Hill **PRODUCERS:** Wyclef Jean, Lauryn Hill **STATS:** Columbia, 1997

When it comes to romance, heaven is in the details. As Lauryn Hill sings rapturously on this mid-tempo scorcher, it can be "the kiss on a collarbone," or "fingertips on the small of my back." But make no mistake–Hill is no fool for love. Ultimately, it's her keen appreciation of both the risks and the rewards of getting in deep that gives "The Sweetest Thing" its power.

With her wily, resonant alto, Hill paints a portrait of a relationship that captures mature love's essential contradiction: It makes us weak even as it elates and empowers us. The singer admits her fear and frustration, and owns up to the little games they engender: "I get mad when you walk away / So I tell you leave when I mean stay." Jean's instrumental arrangement is spare but potent; dreamy waves of acoustic guitar ripple over a subtly thumping bass line, perfectly mirroring the mix of tender affection, wariness, and abject lust in the lyrics. By the time the song finally fades, Hill has managed to both celebrate her passion and assert her independence. "How sad that all things come to an end," she sings. "But then again, I'm not alone." She's got her memories and, more significantly, her faith and her children; and that, truly, can be the sweetest thing of all. *Elysa Gardner*

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TOP FIVE GUILTY PLEASURES

1. "Soul" Ashford & Simpson WRITER: Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson STATS: Capitol, 1984 ❤ Corny and cheesy, yes. But with its incredibly upbeat rhythm and catchy chorus, you can't help but dance. Solid! **2. "Knockin' da Boots" H-Town** WRITERS: Roger Troutman, Paul Burrell, Omingo Conner, Dewayne Conner, Darryl Jackson STATS: Luke, 1993 ❤ It's hard to believe that it was ever cool to say "knockin' boots." But H-Town's "Good lovin', body rockin' " style still makes this song hard to resist. **3. "Hello" Lionel Richie** WRITER: Lionel Richie STATS: Motown, 1983 ❤ You haven't confessed to your friends that you know every single word? Don't feel ashamed. Trust us, we *all* know and love this syrupy ballad: "Is it me/ You're looking for?" **4. "Open Arms" Journey** WRITERS: Jonathan Cain, Steve Perry STATS: Columbia, 1981 ❤ "Lying beside you/ Here after dark/ Feeling your heart beat with mine." Yup. The '80s left plenty of painful memories. Journey's sappy smash is so wrong, it's right. **5. "You Remind Me of Something" R. Kelly** WRITER: Robert Kelly STATS: Jive, 1995 ❤ For the record: Women never like being compared with inanimate objects. And most men already know better. But all that goes out the window when it comes to R. Kelly and his sexy jeep fantasies. "I wanna ride it..."

share your love." Johnny wins for knowing that sometimes a woman just needs to feel appreciated.

32. "Never Can Say Goodbye"
Jackson 5

ALBUM: *Maybe Tomorrow* **WRITER:** Clifton Davis **PRODUCER:** Hal Davis **STATS:** Motown, 1971 ❤ Sometimes love just won't let go, makes you cry and, moan "no no no" in a baby-voiced wail. Michael must know the feeling all too well.

31. "Anytime"
Brian McKnight

ALBUM: *Anytime* **WRITERS:** Brian McKnight, Michael Brandon Barnes **PRODUCER:** Brian McKnight **STATS:** Mercury, 1997 ❤ This song about lost love is heartbreaking. McKnight's whispery vocals bring tears! "Do you ever wake up reaching out for me?"

30. "I Melt With You"
Modern English

MODERN ENGLISH: LONDON FEATURES; JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: WALTER MCBRIDE/RETNA; RICK JAMES: J. WARNALE/OUTLINE



ALBUM: *After the Snow* **WRITER:** Modern English **PRODUCER:** Hugh Jones **STATS:** Sire/Warner Bros., 1983 ❤ There is no right or wrong, should or shouldn't. The rest of the world is crazy. "There's nothing you and I won't do / I'll stop the world and melt with you."

29. "As We Lay"
Shirley Murdock

ALBUM: *Shirley Murdock!* **WRITERS:** Roger Troutman, Billy Beck **PRODUCER:** Roger Troutman **STATS:** Elektra, 1985 ❤ She was dead wrong for sleeping with that woman's husband, but when Shirley sings "We forgot about all the pain we caused / As we slept the night away," it just *sounds* dead right.

28. "Sweet Thing"
Rufus F/ Chaka Khan

ALBUM: *Rufus Featuring Chaka Khan* **WRITERS:** Chaka Khan, Tony Maiden **PRODUCER:** Rufus **STATS:** ABC, 1975 ❤ Chaka wails: "You are my fire / You make me weak with strong desire /... Don't you hear me talkin' baby / Love me now or I'll go crazy." What? What? W-h-a-t?

27. "Fire and Desire"
Rick James F/ Teena Marie

See pullout below.

26. "Love You Down"
Ready for the World

ALBUM: *Long Time Coming* **WRITER:** Melvin Riley Jr. **PRODUCERS:** Ready for the World **STATS:** MCA, 1986 ❤ All your friends say that I'm too young for you / Tell them I can do what guys their age can do." They knew the deal way before Stella even *lost* her groove.

BREAKDOWN:

Person who appears the most times—artist, producer, writer:
Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds with 6

Songs written or produced by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis:
4

Songs members of Jodeci appear on:
4

Songs from MCs:
4

Songs Theodore "Teddy" Pendergrass Jr. appears on:
3

Songs Mary J. Blige appears on:
3

Songs written or produced by Quincy Jones:
3

Songs on Motown:
13

25. "Can You Stand the Rain"
New Edition

ALBUM: *Heart Break* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** James Harris III, Terry Lewis **STATS:** MCA, 1988 ❤ True, *everybody* loves sunny days. It's also true that master seducers New Edition could easily convince a woman to go to hell with them. "C'mon baby / Let's go get wet."

24. "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going"
Jennifer Holliday



ALBUM: Soundtrack for the play *Dreamgirls* **WRITERS:** Henry D. Krieger, Tom Lee Eyen **PRODUCER:** David Foster **STATS:** Geffen, 1982 ❤ More love mandate than love song, God help the man who dares deny the sheer force of Holiday's lungs as she demands "And You, You, You're gonna love me!"

23. "Tender Love"
Force M.D.'s

ALBUM: Soundtrack for the movie *Krush Groove* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** James Harris III, Terry Lewis **STATS:** Tommy Boy, 1986 ❤ "Love so tender / Bringing me close

27



Rick James F/ Teena Marie
"Fire and Desire"

ALBUM: *Street Songs* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Rick James **STATS:** Motown, 1981

Can't quite remember her roots (*Ethiopian or Egyptian....?*); won't try her name. But it was 1980 in Paris, and she was a *beautiful sister*. He went on, *I wanted to stare into her eyes. Talk to her. She softened up my spirit.* Rick James turned out. Imagine that.

Here, he thought, was a girl who sees things: *"Took me a little higher / Made me live again."* Together they created something that slow-dragged and wailed.

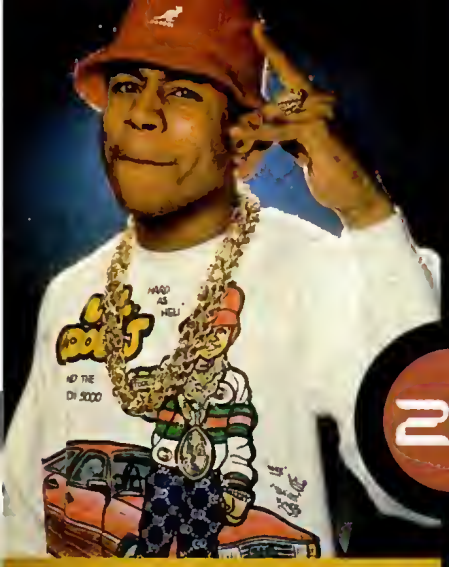
Well. Seeing as he was a searching man (for what was always in his hands) and she was a woman who could see things, they sacrificed love, acknowledged time, parted ways. Him back to his Buffalo, N.Y., ranch. Her (*"Sugar, Sugar, Sugar,"*), he imagined, to heaven.

I ran into Her back in New York. Studio 54. I was seeing Linda Blair at the time. When I saw Her I said, *Just put your arms around me. Let me feel you one more time.* But the first thing Rick James said, in front of his woman, in front of Her man, was, *"Wow."*

Later, all he could do was sing an everlasting lyric, *"Looove–!"* With only one verse, he and friend/siren Teena Marie (sick with a 100 degree temperature) sang what love songs are at the root: seduction, celebration, desire, and confession. Never meant to be a duet, *it was meant to be a sad-ass love song for this girl I lost. How wonderful she was; what an asshole I used to be. Women are the creators of life. God's gift.*

"And I thank you baby."

Karen R. Good



20

L.L. Cool J
"I Need Love"

ALBUM: *Bigger and Deffer* **WRITER:** James Todd Smith **PRODUCERS:** James Todd Smith, L.A. Posse **STATS:** Def Jam, 1987

L.L. Cool J has always walked a thin line between hardcore rhyme wrecker and sensitive loverman. Back in 1985, he revealed his softer, vulnerable side with *Radio*'s lackluster "I Want You" and "I Can Give You More." They flopped, but his third effort at romance would prove to be a much-deserved charm for the legend in leather. An MTV-blessed blockbuster, "I Need Love" appealed to a large, mainstream audience. Girls melted over its sensitive lyrics ("Romance sheer delight how sweet / I gotta find me a girl to make my life complete") and grooved to its soothing musical backdrop.

L.'s ace engineer, Steve Ett, remembers recording the song at New York's Chung King Recording Studios. "With [producer] Bobcat's encouragement, I came up with the four-chord piano arrangement that we built the song around," Ett says. "Once L.L. heard the piano, he was ready to lay his verses down. And like most of his early stuff, he knocked it out in two takes."

Fueled by the unforgettable opening lyrics: "When I'm alone in my room / Sometimes I stare at the wall . . ." the song remains L.L.'s biggest hit to date. Inspiring as well as innovative, the minimally melodic "I Need Love" may not have aged well over time, but because it broke new ground and stretched the limits of what rappers can talk about, it still remains one of hip hop's most defining moments. *Elliott Wilson*

to you / Baby I surrender." Force M.D.'s put an '80s spin on old-school doo-wop while melting us with their perfect harmonies and messages of the *tenderest* love.

22. "Roni"
Bobby Brown

ALBUM: *Don't Be Cruel* **WRITERS:** Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, Antonio "L.A." Reid, Darryl Simmons **PRODUCERS:** Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, Antonio "L.A." Reid **STATS:** MCA, 1988 ❤ When Bobby Brown boldly left New Edition, threw open his arms and warmly sang "My heaaaart, belongs to Tenderoni / She's my only love," we (and Whitney) heard the call. Usher took notes.

21. "I Have Learned to Respect the Power of Love"
Stephanie Mills

ALBUM: *Stephanie Mills* **WRITER:** Angela Winbush, Rene Moore **PRODUCER:** Ron Kersey **STATS:** MCA, 1986 ❤ The *Waiting to Exhale* anthem before people were even talking about exhaling. Stephanie taught us that it's okay to fall hard and to be love's victim. It just bees like that sometimes.

20. "I Need Love"
L.L. Cool J

See pullout at left.

19. "Forever My Lady"
Jodeci

ALBUM: *Forever My Lady* **WRITERS/PRODUCERS:** DeVante Swing, Al B. Sure! **STATS:** Uptown/MCA, 1991 ❤ "So you're having my baby and it means so much to



me..." In one fell swoop, four country boys reromanticized "family" and made "Mommy" a sexy term of endearment.

18. "I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You"
Aretha Franklin

ALBUM: *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You* **WRITER:** Ronnie Shannon **PRODUCER:** Jerry Wexler **STATS:** Atlantic, 1967 ❤ Aretha wails about a do right-woman lovin' a no-good man, until the refrain, which she breathily exhales, "I ain't never loved a man / The way that I / I love you." All heart.

17. "Through the Fire"
Chaka Khan

See pullout on page 73.

16. "Sweet Love"
Anita Baker

ALBUM: *Rapture* **WRITERS:** Anita Baker, Louis A. Johnson **PROOUCER:** Michael J. Powell **STATS:** Elektra, 1986 ❤ "I'll be



calling out your name / I feel no shame / I'm in love / Sweet love." Joyous and intense, this song caresses, uplifts, and celebrates.

15. "Beautiful Ones"
Prince

ALBUM: *Purple Rain* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Prince **STATS:** Warner Bros., 1984 ❤ The beautiful ones *do* hurt you every time, but this song about one extraordinary shriek: "Do you want him? / Or do you want me? / 'Cause I want you!" A love jones, for sure.

14. "Adore"
Prince

ALBUM: *Sign O' the Times* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Prince **STATS:** Paisley Park/Warner Bros., 1987 ❤ A hymn, sung in a blinding falsetto. The seduction of wildly romantic prose : "If God one day struck me blind, your beauty I'd still see." Ain't that love?

13. "You Are My Starship"
Norman Connors, f/Michael Henderson

ALBUM: *You Are My Starship* **WRITER:** Michael E. Henderson **PRODUCER:** Norman Connors **STATS:** Buddah, 1976 ❤ This intergalactic love romp is truly *the* tune: sensitive, sexy, and sensual. Connor only wants to please and be pleased. "And don't you come to soon," he croons over a soft melody. *No problem.*

12. "Try a Little Tenderness"
Otis Redding

ALBUM: *Dictionary of Soul* **WRITER:** James Campbell, Reginald Connelly, Harry Woods **PRODUCER:** Otis Redding, Jim Stewart, Steve Cropper **STATS:** Volt, 1966 ❤ The unforgettable horn intro. Otis softly singing over a barely detectable drum beat, "Oh she may get weary." And finally, Otis explodes, "You've got to squeeze her / Don't tease her / Never leave her."

11. "Sexual Healing"
Marvin Gaye

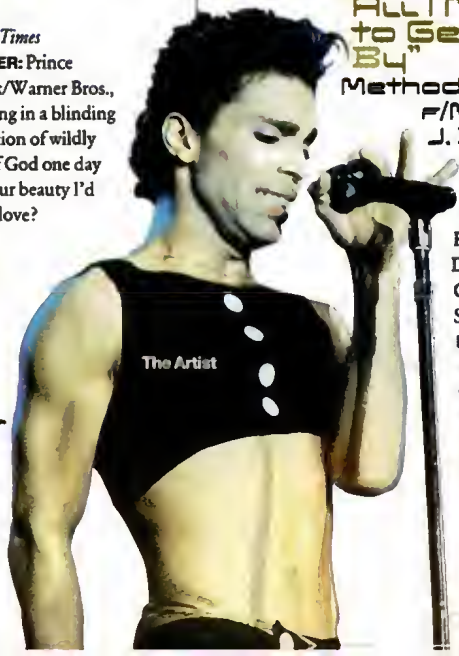
ALBUM: *Midnight Love* **WRITERS:** David Ritz, Marvin Gaye, Odell Elliott Brown Jr. **PRODUCER:** Marvin Gaye **STATS:** Columbia, 1982 ❤ *Don't* get it twisted. This, the last hit of Marvin's legendary career, is a straight up booty call: "I can get on the telephone and call you up baby / And honey, I know you'll be there to relieve me."

10. "Piece of My Love"
Guy

ALBUM: *Guy* **WRITERS:** Gene Griffin, Timothy William Gatling, Aaron Hall **PRODUCER:** Teddy Riley **STATS:** Uptown/MCA, 1988 ❤ No games, "no questions asked...you can have a piece of my love," Aaron Hall emotes seductively. Sounds like he is talking about more than just a piece, though: "Let's make love / *Over* and *over* and *over* and *over* again."

9. "I'll Be There for You / You're All I Need to Get By"
Method Man f/Mary J. Blige

ALBUM: Maxi CD **WRITERS:** Robert Diggs, Clifford Smith **PROOUCER:** Sean Combs **STATS:** Def Jam, 1995 ❤ *The* ruffneck lover's



L.L. COOL J PAUL NATKIN/OUTLINE; ANITA BAKER: CAROL FRIEDMAN/OUTLINE; THE ARTIST: GEOFF SWAINE/LONDON FEATURES; JODECI: ERNIE PANICCIOLI



Chaka Khan

"Through the Fire"

ALBUM: *I Feel for You* **WRITERS:** David Foster, Tom Keane, Cynthia Weil **PRODUCERS:** David Foster, Humberto Gatica, Arif Mardin **STATS:** Warner Bros., 1984

"Through the Fire" is the perfect love song because it has *everything*: sultry keys, cymbals splashing like raindrops, warmhearted bass, plaintive guitars, and a truthful, throaty optimism. The song goes bananas, though in the 52 exuberant final seconds: Think of Chaka's shimmying freestyle of the words "Through the fire / To the limit." They go on and on until they become a life-affirming, go-for-broke mantra.

Legendary producer Arif Mardin recalls the inspired "Through the Fire" recording session: "She's a genius. I mean, she does these vocals *quickly*. We recorded the [instrumental] track in Los Angeles with David Foster and recorded the vocals in New York City. We had candles and dark lights for her in the studio. She likes the atmosphere—she feels it—and all the ideas come out on the spot. The songs just happened naturally. We must have done it in maybe two or three takes."

For 25 years, Chaka Khan has elevated the art of the love ballad to a higher plane. Her deeply felt, raw emotions somehow transcend whatever negativity that may exist in our lives. Chaka's "Through the Fire" is cathartic mood music for the loved and loveless. As sensual as a bubble bath for two, as comforting as a tub of Breyers all to yourself, Chaka Khan's "Through the Fire" gets you lifted every time.

Tom Terrell

anthem. Don't ever think that just because a man smokes blunts, wears fronts, and fucks to Wu-Tang means that he ain't deeply in love. "Plus I love the fact you got a mind of your own / No need to shop around / You got the good shit at home." Right?!?

8. "Always and Forever"

Heatwave

ALBUM: *Too Hot to Handle* **WRITER:** Rod Temperton **PRODUCER:** Barry Blue **STATS:** Epic, 1976 ❤ Unconditional,



eternal love might sound like fantasy, but somehow, when Johnnie Wilder sings, "We'll share tomorrow together / Forever," it's the absolute truth.

7. "Stay"

Jodeci

ALBUM: *Forever My Lady* **WRITER:** DeVante Swing **PRODUCERS:** DeVante Swing, Al B. Sure! **STATS:** Uptown/MCA, 1991 ❤ Balm on a bruised soul: "Baby / Please stay / For a little while." *Just be by me.* From the uncomplicated, intense lyrics to the slow jamming groove, this is an authentic love song. A classic—from an album full of them.

6. "Seven Days"

Mary J. Blige

ALBUM: *Share My World* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Malik Pendleton **STATS:** MCA, 1997 ❤ Friends to lovers? Drama. First Mary J. breaks it down (as only she can) day by day. And when Grover Washington Jr., starts doin' his thing—you're officially turned out! Now what are you gonna do?

5. "Sign Your Name"

Terence Trent D'Arby

ALBUM: *Introducing the Hardline According to Terence Trent D'Arby* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Terence Trent D'Arby **STATS:** Columbia, 1987 ❤ TTD drops his boastful guard in this platitude-filled ode to quixotic love. "Sign your name across my heart," he purrs. His invitation's simple and quintessentially Terence. We accept.

4. "House Is Not a Home"

Luther Vandross

ALBUM: *Never Too Much* **WRITERS:** Hal David, Burt F. Bacharach **PRODUCER:** Luthor Vandross **STATS:** Epic, 1981 ❤ Beautiful pleading from a brother who's *deeply* in love and missing his lover has never sounded so romantic— "Say you're gonna be / Are you gonna be / Still in love with me?"

3. "Let's Stay Together"

Al Green

ALBUM: *Let's Stay Together* **WRITERS:** Al Green, Al Jackson, Willie Mitchell **PRODUCER:** Willie Mitchell **STATS:** The Right Stuff, 1972 ❤ This song is about all the promises made in the beginning: "You make me feel so brand new / And I want to spend my life with you /...Loving you forever is what I need." It's about hope, possibilities and overcoming the odds. Sigh. Sometimes even forever isn't long enough.

TOP FIVE SONGS TO BREAK UP TO

1. "Kiss and Say Goodbye"

The Manhattans

WRITER: Winfred "Blue" Lovett **STATS:** Columbia, 1976 ❤ Scorches the depths of your soul with its stirring, tortured vocals: "It's gonna hurt me, I can't lie / Maybe you'll meet another guy / Understand me won't you try, try, try..."

2. "Tyrone"

Erykah Badu

WRITERS: Erica Wright, Ellis Hurt **STATS:** Universal, 1997 ❤ Fed up and falling out of love. Erykah's sly attitude, witty jabs, and strong, beautiful voice truly inspire.

3. "Wildflower"

Ghostface Killah

WRITERS: D. Coles, B. Diggs **STATS:** Razor Sharp/Epic, 1996 ❤ Love gone wrong turns dark and malevolent. Sometimes, strangely enough, it also turns to art: "Yeah, bitch / I fucked your friend..."

4. "Before I Let You Go"

Blackstreet

WRITERS: Teddy Riley, Levi Seymore, David Hollister, Dermont Riley, Antwone Dickey, Andrae Hannibal **STATS:** Interscope, 1994 ❤ This tear-inducing song about lost love speaks to the romantic in all of us. If it must end, please, God, let it end with a kiss.

5. "Paper Thin"

MC Lyte

WRITERS: Lana Moorer, Freddie Byrd **STATS:** First Priority, 1988 ❤ The distinct, raspy voice takes charge over an infectious beat. "When you say you love me / It doesn't matter / It goes into my head as just chitchatter..."

2. "The Sweetest Taboo"

Sade

ALBUM: *Promise* **WRITERS:** Sade, Martin Ditcham **PRODUCER:** Robin Millar **STATS:** CBS/Epic 1985 ❤ Before Lauryn, Maxwell, Erykah, D'Angelo, and Tony Rich, Sade turned *everybody* out with her bohemian soul and deep, smoky voice. "You give me the sweetest taboo, that's why I'm in love with you." Enough said!



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Marvin Gaye

"Let's Get It On"

ALBUM: *Let's Get It On*
WRITERS/PRODUCERS: Ed Townsend, Marvin Gaye
STATS: Motown, 1973



I contend that sex is sex and love is love. When combined, they work well together, if two people are of the same mind. But they really are two different needs and should be treated as such."

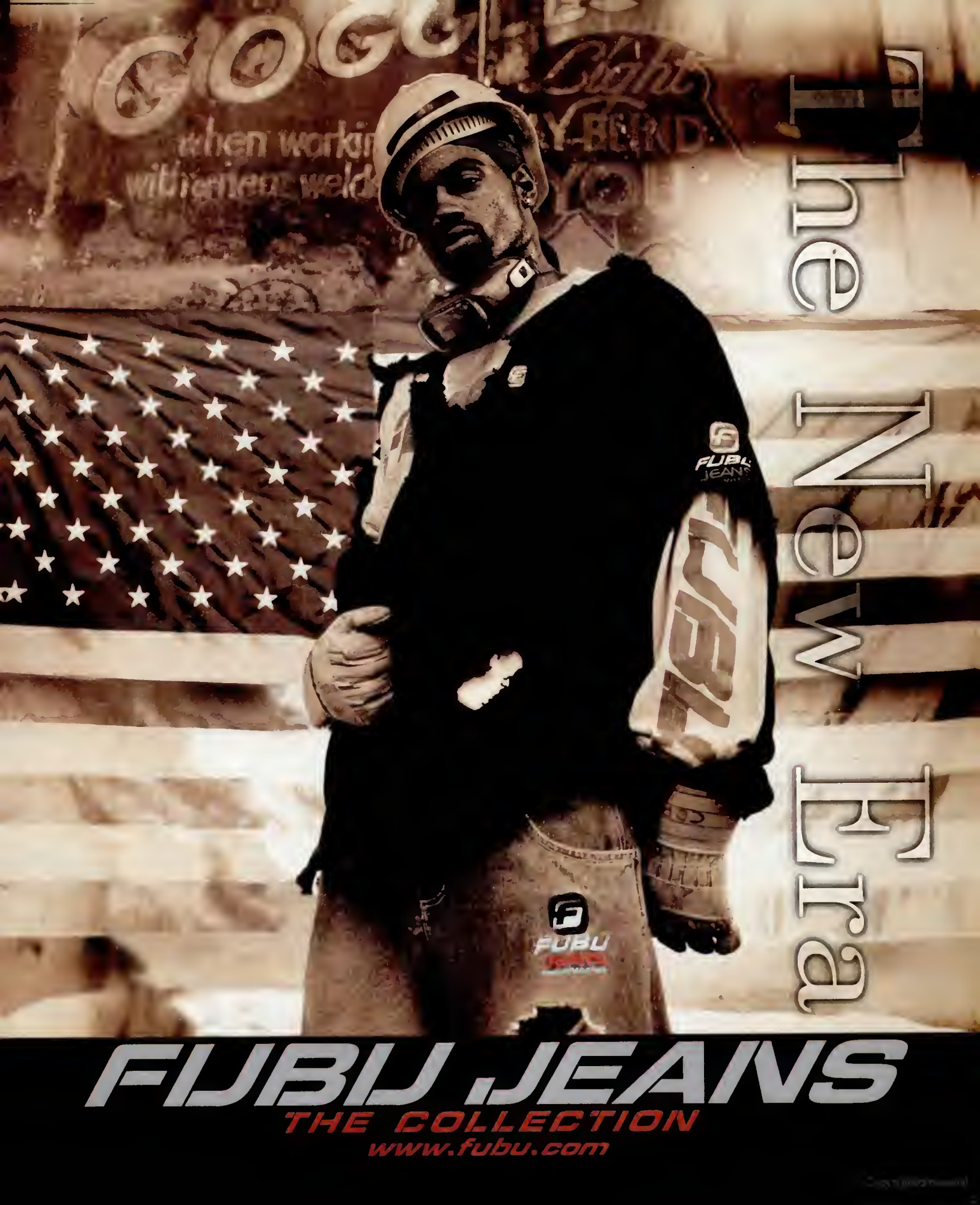
So wrote Marvin Gaye in the liner notes to the *Let's Get It On* album—and if that was his attitude, does it even make sense for us to proclaim the pure, mind-melting lust of the album's title track the single greatest love song of all time?

In a word—*hell, yes.* Gaye's breathtaking performance reaches emotional depths light years beyond the grasp of today's horny freak seekers. In "Let's Get It On," as he sings during the fade-out, sex is "something like sanctified."

According to Ed Townsend, who cowrote and coproduced *Let's Get It On* with Gaye, there was a very specific inspiration for Gaye's intensity on this particular song. For this session, Townsend brought a friend's daughter, 16-year-old Janis Hunter, to the studio. "When Marvin sang that line 'I ain't threatening, I want to get it on,' he was really talking to me," says Townsend. "He meant he was *seriously* interested in this girl." Hunter and Gaye would be married the next year.

Townsend also credits a challenge he had issued to the singer that day. Gaye's last few albums were full of layered, studio-crafted vocals, and Townsend told Gaye that the reason he was afraid to tour was that he couldn't sing more than a few seconds at a time anymore. "Marvin took his shirt off, his shoes off, and sang flat-footed for ten minutes with no interruptions," says Townsend. "Then he came back in and said, 'How ya like me now?' "

The answer is still clear: We'll always love you, Marvin. *Alan Light*


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19 BEST singles OF 1998

Think about it: Aside from these songs, what else were you even listening to last year? We picked these based on beats, lyrics, and bounce-ability. Also: Did the artist freak it? Make us *feel* it? Yes. These are the 19 best (of the best.)

19 "Friend of Mine (remix)" Kelly Price f/ Ronald Isley and R. Kelly

ALBUM: *Soul of a Woman* **WRITERS:** Kelly Price, Steve Jordan, Jeffrey Walker, Anthony Dent, Robert Kelly **PRODUCER:** Robert Kelly **STATS:** T-Neck/Island ♦ The exchange between R. Kelly and Ronald Isley is priceless, but the pain in Kelly Price's powerful voice, as she struggles with her husband's *and* her best friend's betrayal, is what makes you truly *feel* this song.



18 "Make 'Em Say Ughh" Master P f/ Fiend, Silkk the Shocker, Mia X, and Mystikal

ALBUM: *Ghetto D* **WRITERS:** Percy Miller, Richard Jones, Vyshonn Miller, Mia Young, Michael Tyler **PRODUCER:** Craig Lawson **STATS:** No Limit ♦ *Endless* energy. Not only did Master P and the rest of the No Limit crew have us screaming "*Ughh*," they had us bouncing harder than we've ever bounced before.



17 "The Dope Show" Marilyn Manson

ALBUM: *Mechanical Animals* **WRITERS:** Marilyo Manson, Twiggy Ramirez **PRODUCER:** Michael Beinhorn **STATS:** Interscope ♦ The Glam monsters come up with a rockin' nugget by skinny-dipping into the Bowie canon, circa *Aladdin Sane*. Manlyn sings with a mannered swagger and lyrics that would make Warhol giggle: "...We love your face / We'd really like to sell you."



16 "I Gotta Be" Jagged Edge

ALBUM: *A Jagged Era* **WRITERS:** Jermaine Dupri, Brandon Casey, Brian Casey, Manuel Seal **PRODUCER:** Jermaine Dupri **STATS:** So So Def/Columbia ♦ Within 1998's cutthroat world, a pair of southern twins, Brian and Brandon Casey, embraced us with a dream of true love—"You make me whole, you make me right"—and a jam so slow it felt frozen in time.



15 "Can I Get A..." Jay-Z f/ Amil and Ja Rule

ALBUM: *Vol. 2... Hard Knock Life* **WRITERS:** Shawn Carter, Irving Lorenzo, Jeff Atkins, Rob Mays **PRODUCERS:** Irv Gotti, Rob Mays **STATS:** Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam ♦ Jay's the leader of the pack, but Ja Rule's verse ("It ain't even a question...") is what changes this song from bot single to classic joint. And Amil's poppin' little attitude ("Don't test my patience / Nigga / I'm high maintenance") seals the deal.



14 "It Ain't My Fault" Silkk the Shocker f/ Mystikal

ALBUM: *Charge It 2 da Game* **WRITER:** Vyshonn Miller **PRODUCER:** Craig Bazile **STATS:** No Limit ♦ It's all about the hook and the *ridiculously* bumpin' beat. Besides, we like that the chorus serves as a sassy reply to anyone tryin' to blame you for something!



13 "Ruff Ryders Anthem" DMX

ALBUM: *It's Dark and Hell Is Hot* **WRITERS:** Earl Simmons, Kaseem Dean **PRODUCER:** Swizz **STATS:** Ruff Ryders/Def Jam ♦ "Stop! Drop! / Shut 'em down / Open up shop" is the new call of the wild. With X's ghetto-saturated lyrics writhing over turbulent drums, this was a succulent treat for starved hardcore hip hop fans.



12 "No, No, No, Part 2" Destiny's Child f/ Wyclef Jean

ALBUM: *Destiny's Child* **WRITERS:** Vincent Herbert, Rob Fusari, Marie Brown, Calvin Gaines, Barry White, Wyclef Jean **PRODUCER:** Wyclef Jean, coproduced by Jerry "Te Bass" Duplessis, Che Greene **STATS:** Columbia ♦ The beat is *too* infectious. "You wanna be mine / So get your act together / Cause you're running out of time." A fickle brother who can't tell a sister how he really feels will *always* miss out. To this we say, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes."



11 "Too Close" Next

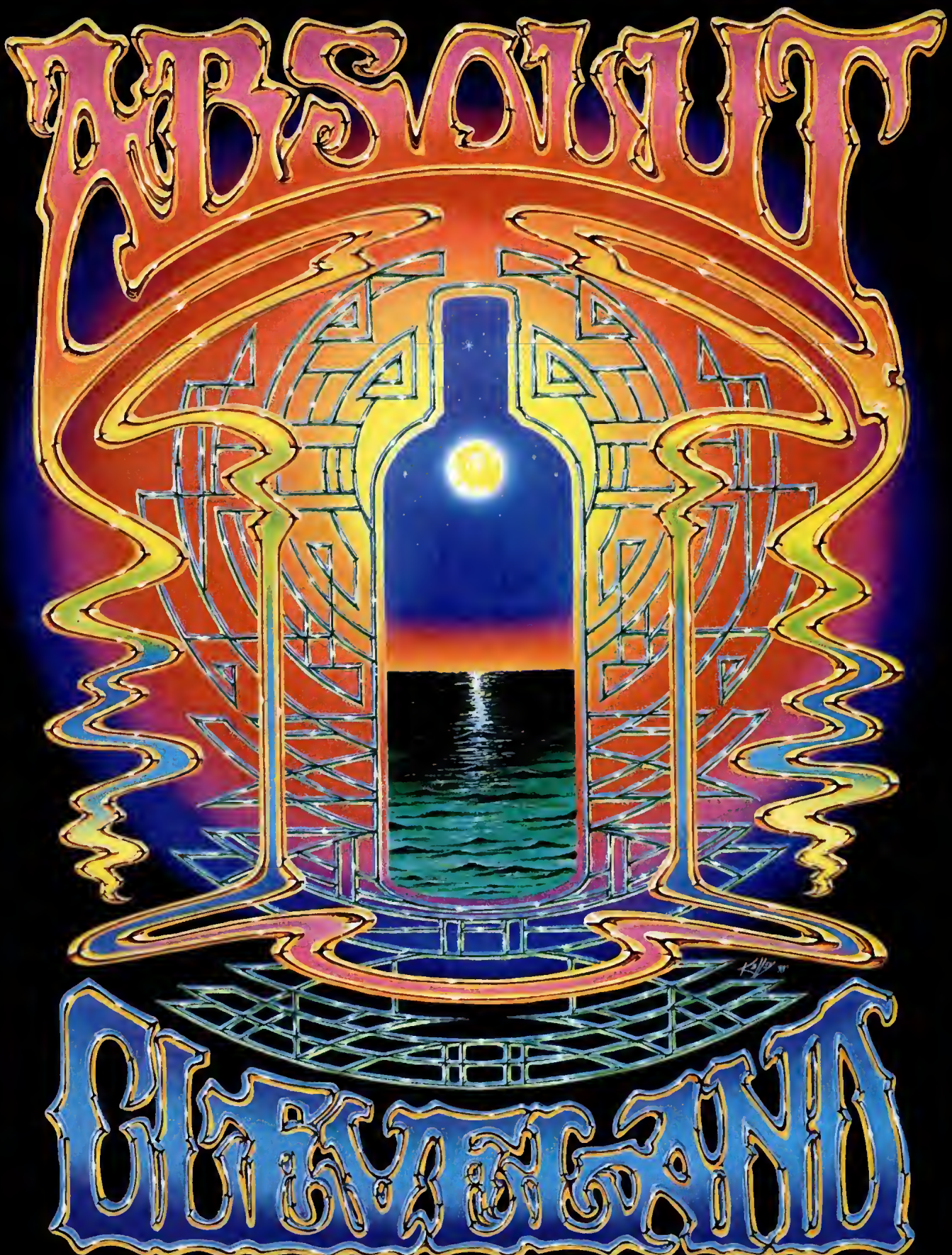
ALBUM: *Rated Next* **WRITERS:** Keir Gist, Darren Lighty, Robert Huggar, Robert Ford, Denzil Miller, James Moore, Kurt Walker, Lawrence Smith, Raphael Brown **PRODUCERS:** Keir Gist, Darren Lighty **STATS:** Arista ♦ Start with two scoops of irresistibly spongy dance beats. Add three spoonfuls of hot butterscotch harmony. Sprinkle with erotic dance-floor small talk ("You're making it hard for me"). Presto! Platinum banana split with extra cream.



10 "Who Am I" Beenie Man

ALBUM: *Many Moods of Moses* **WRITERS:** Moses Davis, Jeremy Harding **PRODUCER:** Jeremy Harding **STATS:** VP ♦ One of the *wickedest* licks of all time. You just *had* to rusb the dance floor and let the driving dancehall groove have its way with your body.





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19 BEST singles OF 1998

9 "Nice & Slow" Usher

ALBUM: *My Way* **WRITERS:** Jermaine Dupri, Manuel Seal, Usher Raymond, Brian Casey **PRODUCER:** Jermaine Dupri **STATS:** LaFace ♦ Good things come to those who wait. He may be young, but Usher's sexy, certain vocals ("I've got plans to put my hands in places / I've never seen") prove that he can hang with the biggest boys.



8 "I Get So Lonely (remix)" Janet Jackson f/ Blackstreet

ALBUM: Maxi CD **WRITERS:** Janet Jackson, James Harris III, Terry Lewis, René Elizondo Jr. **PRODUCERS:** Teddy Riley, Timothy Mosley **STATS:** Virgin ♦ Remember that throb—you've felt it—that ache that erects itself when your boo leaves town? In this cut, Miss Janet breaks it down, breaks it down, breaks it down. And loneliness never sounded so good.



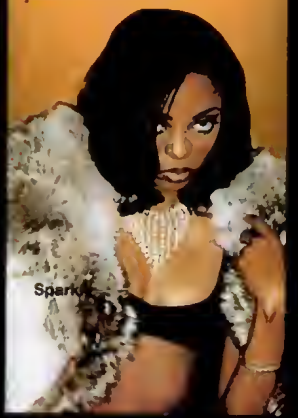
7 "The Boy Is Mine" Brandy and Monica

ALBUMS: *Never Say Never* and *The Boy Is Mine* **WRITERS:** Rodney Jerkins, Brandy Norwood, Dashawn Daniels, Fred Jerkins III, Japhe Tejeda **PRODUCERS:** Rodney Jerkins, Dallas Austin, Brandy **STATS:** Atlantic and Arista ♦ A fusion of two beautiful, perfectly matched, attitude-filled voices. Their battle seems simple, but because fighting over a lover rarely is, we find ourselves caught up in the drama over and over again—and never tiring of the catchy chorus. Forget the boy; just give us Brandy and Monica.



6 "Be Careful" Sparkle f/ R. Kelly

ALBUM: *Sparkle* **WRITER/PRODUCER:** Robert Kelly **STATS:** Rock Land/Interscope ♦ The best relationship song of the year. There *are* two sides to every story: you heard him sing, "Wait a minute / Let me finish." And no one can tell stories quite like R. Kelly, one of the best singer/songwriter/producers of our time.



5 "Still Not a Player" Big Punisher f/ Joe

ALBUM: *Capital Punishment* **WRITERS:** Christopher Rios, Jerome Foster **PRODUCER:** Knobody **STATS:** Loud ♦ Ex-player Joe and anti-player Pun play together and record one of the year's dopest cuts. Pun's crushing tales (Rubbin' your spot love / Got you screamin' punish me), the high-energy track, and that "*Boricua / Morena*" chant made us *loco* on the dance floor.



4 "Lookin' at Me" Mase f/ Puff Daddy

ALBUM: *Harlem World* **WRITERS:** Mason Betha, Chad Hugo, Pharrell Williams, Sean Combs **PRODUCERS:** Chad Hugo, Pharrell Williams **STATS:** Bad Boy ♦ The *only* Mase song. He's never sounded cuter. He's never looked better (video-wise). And his sweet, bossy rhymes make you appreciate Mase for being Mase, not Puff's sidekick.



3 "Lost Ones" Lauryn Hill

ALBUM: *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* **WRITER:** Lauryn Hill **PRODUCERS:** Lauryn Hill, Vada Nobles **STATS:** Ruffhouse/Columbia ♦ Revenge is sweet. "Never underestimate those who you scar / Cause karma, karma, karma comes back to you hard." This is the kind of verbal beat-down that leaves you pitying the fool who inspired it.



2 "Super Thug" Noreaga

ALBUM: *N.O.R.E.* **WRITERS:** Victor Santiago, Pharrell Williams, Chad Hugo, Deborah Harry, Christopher Stein **PRODUCERS:** Pharrell Williams, Chad Hugo **STATS:** Penalty ♦ "In the Philippines??!!" N.O.R.E. brings the beauty of belligerence to bold new heights with an unforgettable chorus—one absolutely devoid of melody. "What! what! what! what! what! what! what! [Repeat eight times.]"

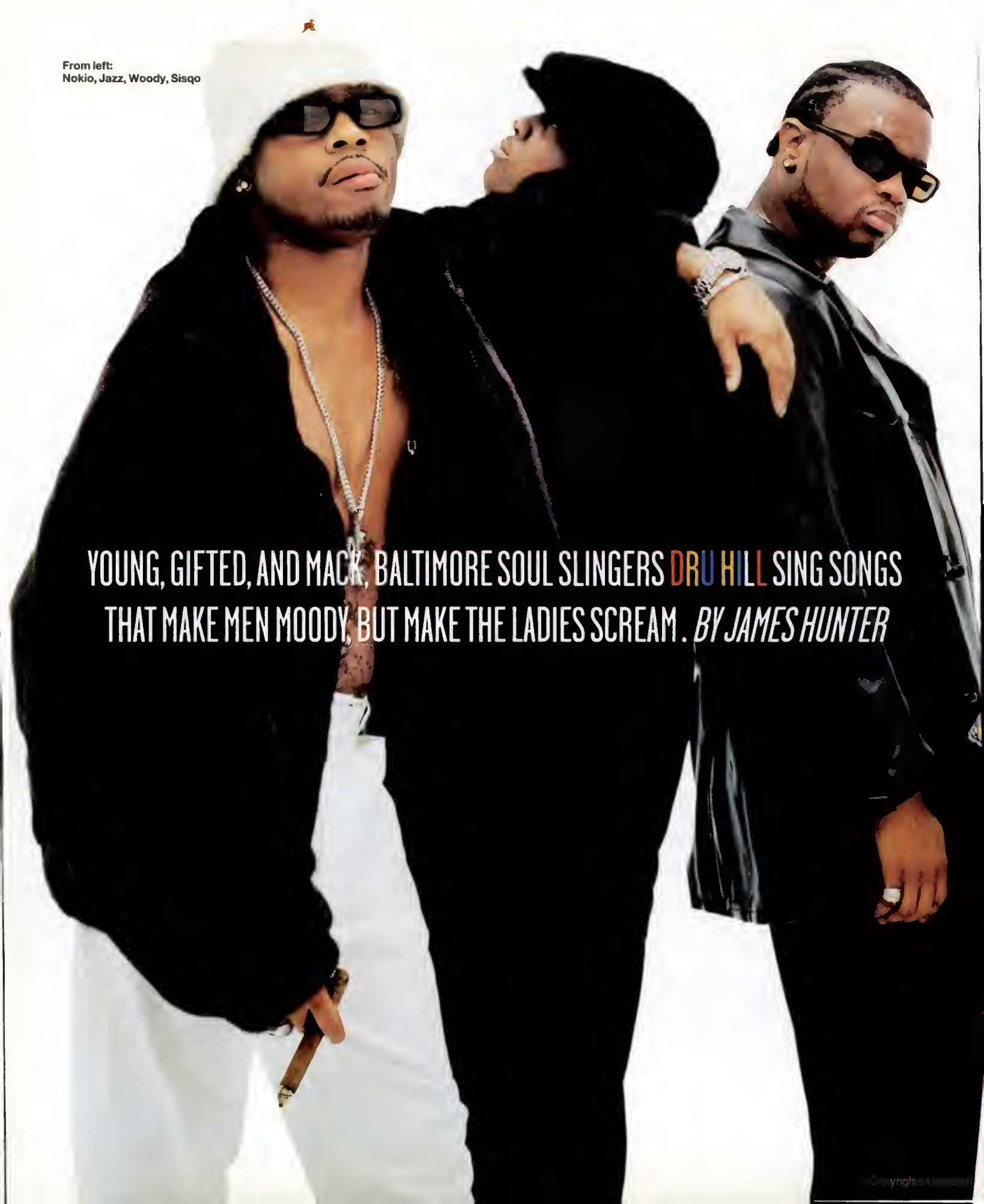


1 "Are You That Somebody?" Aaliyah

ALBUM: *Dr. Dolittle: The Album* **WRITERS:** Timothy Mosley, Stephen Garrett **PRODUCER:** Timothy Mosley **STATS:** Atlantic ♦ People couldn't get enough of this insanely dope cut—and with good reason. Hip hop may have ruled the charts in 1998, but a *dirty* Timbaland-produced southern bass line and a slightly freaky Aaliyah ("I been watching you / Like a hawk in the sky / And you are my prey") are why this joint is song of the year. Plus, this budding superstar's tight soprano drives Tim's custom-made bouncin' rhythm, while those ridiculously infectious baby coos juxtapose her self-assured lyrics. The giggles throughout come straight from an actual pull-my-string chuckling doll. "They're perfectly tuned to the guitar," Tim says. Whenever I add something to a track, even when it's not a musical instrument, I make it sound like one." To these kids, breakin' hits is child's play. *Mykella Van Cooten*




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From left:
Nokio, Jazz, Woody, Sisqo

YOUNG, GIFTED, AND MACK, BALTIMORE SOUL SLINGERS DRU HILL SING SONGS THAT MAKE MEN MOODY, BUT MAKE THE LADIES SCREAM. *BY JAMES HUNTER*

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HEART DOCTORS

About 35,000 cardiologists have reserved nearly every hotel, restaurant, and car service in Dallas as they converge on the Texas metropolis for a conference of the American Heart Association. Clutching their coats against the fall air, they are everywhere, grouped together in small conspiratorial clumps, peering out over clipboards, speaking inaudibly to one another as they consult their watches and wait on rides, but *never* lighting up cigars.

During this year's conference, Dru Hill, four twentysomething Baltimore heart specialists of a more romantic sort—the hottest soul honchos around—flew into Dallas early one morning from Houston. Their names were Mark Andrews, Tamir Ruffin, James Green, and Larry Anthony Jr., although by now their growing number of fans know them as Sisqo, Nokio, Woody, and Jazz, respectively. They had met with radio programmers in Houston, promoting *Enter the Dru*, the follow-up to *Dru Hill*, their 1997 multimillion-selling debut that spawned such hits as "Tell Me" and "In My Bed." In Dallas, they had gone to their record label's branch office, where the idea had been lunch.

Around two that afternoon, though, Dru Hill return to their hotel with several buckets of Kentucky Fried Chicken. "At the branch, they only had what you have," Sisqo says, scowling as he points to a New York visitor's Chinese cabbage sandwich. "I'll eat healthy when I'm old." But Dru Hill's platinum-haired energy center doesn't linger on the topic of nutrition. In a flash, he's off talking about performers like Alanis Morissette ("Fascination, fascination"), Marilyn Manson ("He does this thing when he's onstage, standin' there in this ugly position—it's like his stance"), and Michael Jackson ("Anybody who throws the leg, you know he got it from Michael").

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PIOTR SIKORA
IN NEW YORK CITY ON NOVEMBER 15, 1998

he got it from Michael"). This is because Sisqo himself has been performing since he was a kid growing up in the churches, schools, and streets of East Baltimore, USA.

"Singing was so second nature to me that I didn't even know I could sing," he says, polishing off a chicken leg. "My sister used to play Guy, Michael Jackson, stuff like that. She used to play Guy's "Goodbye Love" all the time. So I was on the phone with this girl one night. She put me on hold. I was kind of, like, humming the song. When she came back on, I didn't know it, so I was still singing. She started screaming." Sisqo raises his voice to a shrill cry: " 'Oh, I didn't know you could sing!' she says. So when I saw the reaction, I was like, 'Oh, oohkaaay.' " As he tells the story, he shoots out of his chair at least four times.

Nokio—Sisqo's lower-key counterpart whose intensity emerges in less manic ways—picks up the background story. Nokio lived on the west side of town and was the only Dru member to attend a Methodist church without a choir instead of a Baptist church with several. "Guys would come over to my house for rehearsal and I'd be like, Oh, you can't be walking up and down my streets singing, man. Y'all'll get beat up or something."

"[Nokio] lived in the heart of the ghetto," Sisqo interjects. He jumps up and sits back down, flinging napkins here, and chicken bones there, but his mind is glued to the twisting tale of Dru Hill's origins, a story he says he's been waiting a long time to tell.

"But it wasn't like that," Nokio explains. "All the hustlers would be like, 'Oh, come over here, I'll give you ten dollars and you can go sing for my girlfriend.' I'd do that, then the girlfriends would be like...whatever."

"In the beginning," Sisqo pipes up, "[Nokio] had *two* earrings! I had *no* earrings then." Now Sisqo sports several, plus a couple of piercings that decorate his left eyebrow. "Noke started *everything*. He lived in the ghetto, but whatever he did they just accepted it. Where I was from, there was no accepting that kind of stuff. I don't know how he did it."

In the face of such flattery, Nokio personifies nonchalance. "Yeah, I was always cool with everybody," he reflects, "a people person. When I was in high school, I used to wear suits to school, carry a briefcase. I had my trench coat. I was business, all the time."

"I did *stupid* stuff!" Sisqo yells, rising to his feet as though his chair suddenly has caught fire. "I'd been locked up three times. I used to have a temper from hell. That's where all these scars come from! When we'd jump somebody, I'd be the first to hit him. But when I met Nokio, he brought out the real me."

"I didn't base my life on other people's ideas," Nokio whispers. "[And Sisqo] wasn't no tough guy." Nokio's cell phone—one of four he has, in addition to a beeper—rings. He keeps the call brief.

Three summers ago, after loads of talent shows and hometown adulation, the members of Dru Hill had grown tense. For years, at Nokio's direction, they had switched schools, group members, and group names. As 14K Harmony, they had acquired enough skills and reputation to play New York's Apollo Theater; as Legecy, they had been signed to a deal with University Music that Sisqo remembers as "teeny-weeny." There was also a time they called themselves the Storm. ("We had a jingle: The rain, the thunder, and the lightning," Sisqo howls.) A local radio station supported that last incarnation, featuring the group two years running on Valentine's Day. Once, Nokio's then-girlfriend recognized them on the radio. She wondered, "Is that you?" and Nokio had covered his eyes and whispered, "Oh, no, no, no."

The group had finally taken shape, having secured the talents of Woody, a longtime associate of Nokio's whose mother forbade him to sing secular music, and Jazz, who'd been an opera student for two years at the Baltimore School for the Arts. They had even flown to L.A., where they astonished Interscope chief Jimmy Iovine by perfectly singing back to him Tupac Shakur's then-unreleased "How Do You Want It?" After they had heard the song just once.

"Our ears had become so keen," Sisqo marvels. "So we decided that we were either going to get signed, or brothers were going to school. We'd been at it since the beginning of ninth grade, going on four years."

Then Island Black Music president Hiriam Hicks rang. First, he planned to see the group in Washington, D.C. But then he asked the guys to come to New York's Hit Factory recording studio. Nokio remembers how the idea of piling into a car, driving to New York, and listening to Hicks's song struck everybody: "It was, like," he says with a smile, "a chore."

"We were almost disgruntled, like, Ah, man, what are we doing this for? But Hiriam was in there, with [A&R man] Butt Naked Tim Dawg. Tim is like, 'All right, nigga, what you going to do?' We're all standing there in a semicircle."

"I was in the studio mastering a song for the *Eddie* soundtrack," Hicks recalls. "The song was 'Tell Me,' which someone else had recorded. They had auditioned for me. I took the vocals off the song someone else had sung and asked Dru Hill could they record it. They said, 'Absolutely.' They were excited. And the rest is history."

"Nobody ever expected us to be able to sing it," Sisqo says. They then repeated the same harmonic mastery they had in L.A. "We just busted out. The whole room was amazed. Halfway through the song, Hiriam just stopped. [He said], 'You guys gotta sign this paper.' "

It was the group's turn to be amazed. "We looked at them like, Ah, get the fuck out of here," Sisqo remembers. "We had just driven up from Baltimore. It was, like, the last thing on our minds that we were going to get a deal. We were sitting there in shock."



One for all; all for one

"I MET K-CI IN SAN FRANCISCO," SAYS SISQO. "IT WAS LIKE MEETING MICHAEL JACKSON TO ME. MY MUSCLES LOCKED UP, MY MOUTH GOT DRY, AND I STARTED LICKING MY LIPS."

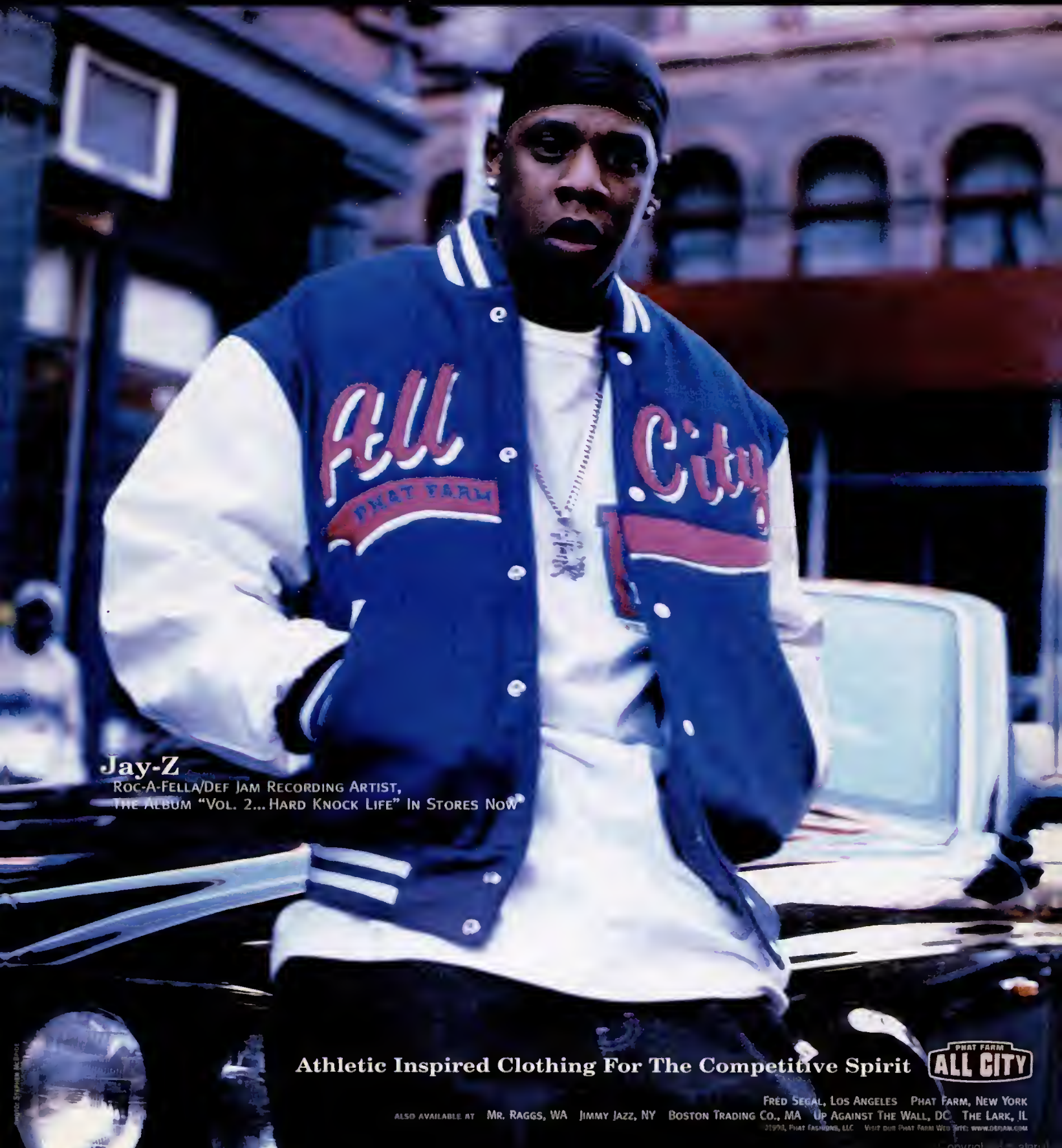
Dru Hill are the synthesis of the decade's top male R&B harmony groups. To hear them speak about their two chief influences—Boyz II Men, with all their pop dazzle, and Jodeci, the quintessential church-sired bad boys—is to understand how deeply the records of such groups can affect the lives of their listeners.

"I met DeVante [Swing of Jodeci] not long ago," Nokio says. "I was walking out of the lobby of a hotel in L.A. I looked at him, and he was like, 'What's up, man?' I was *amazed*. All those years of watching him..."

"I met K-Ci," Sisqo immediately adds, "in San Francisco. It was like meeting Michael Jackson to me. My muscles locked up, my mouth got dry, and I started licking my lips. He told me, 'You sound like me the way I sound like Bobby Womack. It's obvious that you studied me like I studied him.' "

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Sisqo laughs now about how, when people used to tell them they sounded like their heroes, they might respond. They had crammed, after all, for high school degrees in both Jodeci and Boyz II Men.

"People said, 'Them boys sound too much like Jodeci,' " he says, "and in a way we were like, Shit, we accomplished our goals! The only reason we'd get compared to them was because Boyz II Men never did the sex stuff. We wanted to *be* Jodeci—the boots, all in black..."

"The tattoos," Nokio adds.

"But right before the second album," says Sisqo, "they started scaring people. Nobody will ever forget the *Billboard* Music Awards, when they came out with the machetes and the cigars."

"They lost people there," says Nokio.

"Yeah, Noke was like, 'What the hell are they doing?' But in my mind, Jodeci could do no wrong. Still, once they started to turn into this small box for urban girls, they were selling two million, three million—and Boyz II Men were selling ten million. Nokio was like, 'I don't know about you, man, but'—these were his exact words—'Jodeci is a fad, and I don't want to be a fad.' "

Nokio's cell phone rings. He whispers into it for a while.

"So we really started honing our harmonies," Sisqo continues. "And we started opening up for hip hop shows. Hip hop and soul were all smashed together for us, anyway."

But to really be a successful group, you had to have four real guys. Woody, long captivated by Nokio's industrious ideas, auditioned during a moment when Nokio and Sisqo had temporarily abandoned R&B and returned to gospel. "He had been singing for so long that his ears were keen too," Sisqo says. "And Woody's mother loved the gospel direction."

"Yeah," says Woody, a steady fellow who says he's still amazed when fans call out his name at concerts, airports, or on the Internet, "later she was like, 'You tricked me!' "

And then there was Jazz, fond of '70s jams ("People would say I had an old soul") and Coogi sweaters. "I kept hearing about [the group]," Jazz remembers. "I was the last to come on the scene. They had this type of air about them that looked like star status. They kept coming to school every day with fresh gear, catching people's eyes. I was used to being with other groups where it would take a minute for us to get somewhere, a whole lot of practice, having to spoon-feed them every little thing. When I got with them, it was like a sigh of relief: Yes! I'm finally with people on my level."

Together, the result was Dru Hill's stellar mix of skills and confidence. They recorded "Tell Me" in a style so aggressively Jodeci-like that, Sisqo still maintains, "had Jodeci sung 'Tell Me' it would have sounded just as good." But Dru Hill began to define *themselves* on *Dru Hill*, arriving at an individualized style based on gospel-bred emotional finesse. On *Enter the Dru* they take it further, applying those qualities to Spanish-flared jams like "Real Freak" and "How Deep Is Your Love," hip hop–flavored joints like "This Is What We Do" (with Method Man), and classic soul like "Angel," written by Woody, and Babyface's "These Are the Times." The mix ranges from frankly sexual tunes to ones that hover ever so politely above the clouds.

"We want the same things," Woody explains, "but we go about it in different ways. It's that diversity that makes Dru Hill cool."



Dru Hill rolling deep on the 1997 *Billboard* Awards

"I AM NOT A DANCING [BROTHER]," SAYS WOODY. "WHEN I WAS YOUNG, IF I WAS CAUGHT DANCING I GOT A BEATING."

Island Records chairman Davitt Sigerson puts it a little differently. "The world," he says, "is not entirely comprised of people who only want to perform oral sex or propose marriage. For most of us, in fact, the two are closely related."

Atlanta's Daryl Simmons, the writer/producer of "In My Bed" as well as the brains behind the new album's extraordinary re-creation of the Dells' 1971 "The Love We Had (Stays on My Mind)," sums up Dru Hill this way: "They've sat back and watched Jodeci and Boyz II Men, and they've incorporated that into themselves, taking what they wanted to take. But most importantly, they've put themselves into it. They're seasoned veterans at a very young age. They're like, yeah, we're rookies. But no, we're not."

Dru are confident enough about their own smashed-together soul, gospel, and hip hop sound to remain fans of the ultra-electric groups they emulated. "They love Boyz II Men and Jodeci because they are relevant now, but also because they can hold their own weight," says Londell McMillan, the group's attorney. "If they couldn't hold their own weight, they wouldn't be talking about Jodeci and Boyz II Men. They'd be talking about somebody from yesteryear." True indeed.

Nokio and Woody are the only heart doctors in sight. Nokio, wearing an orange tracksuit, oval-shaped Gucci sunglasses, and two diamonds in each earlobe, and Woody, in jeans and a black Lions sweatshirt, are having dinner with a guest on a slow Tuesday evening in Dallas. Nokio is rating the top 10 malls in the U.S. ("Atlanta's Lenox Square and Phipps Plaza first, the Galleria in Houston second, L.A.'s Beverly Center third...") and ignoring his burger. He mentions that after his favorite white tennis shoes develop a crease across the toe, he tosses them.

Woody drinks pink lemonade and gets passionate about one thing: dancing. "I am not a dancing motherfucker," he states flatly. "When I was young, if I was caught dancing I got a beating. So I was like, Fuck this, I don't want to be hit. First time I ever danced in my life was the 'Tell Me' video. That's why when you see the videos, I'm in the back." He mentions some of the friends he stays tight with back home, how he flew one of them to the Soul Train Music Awards (in L.A.) to cut his hair.

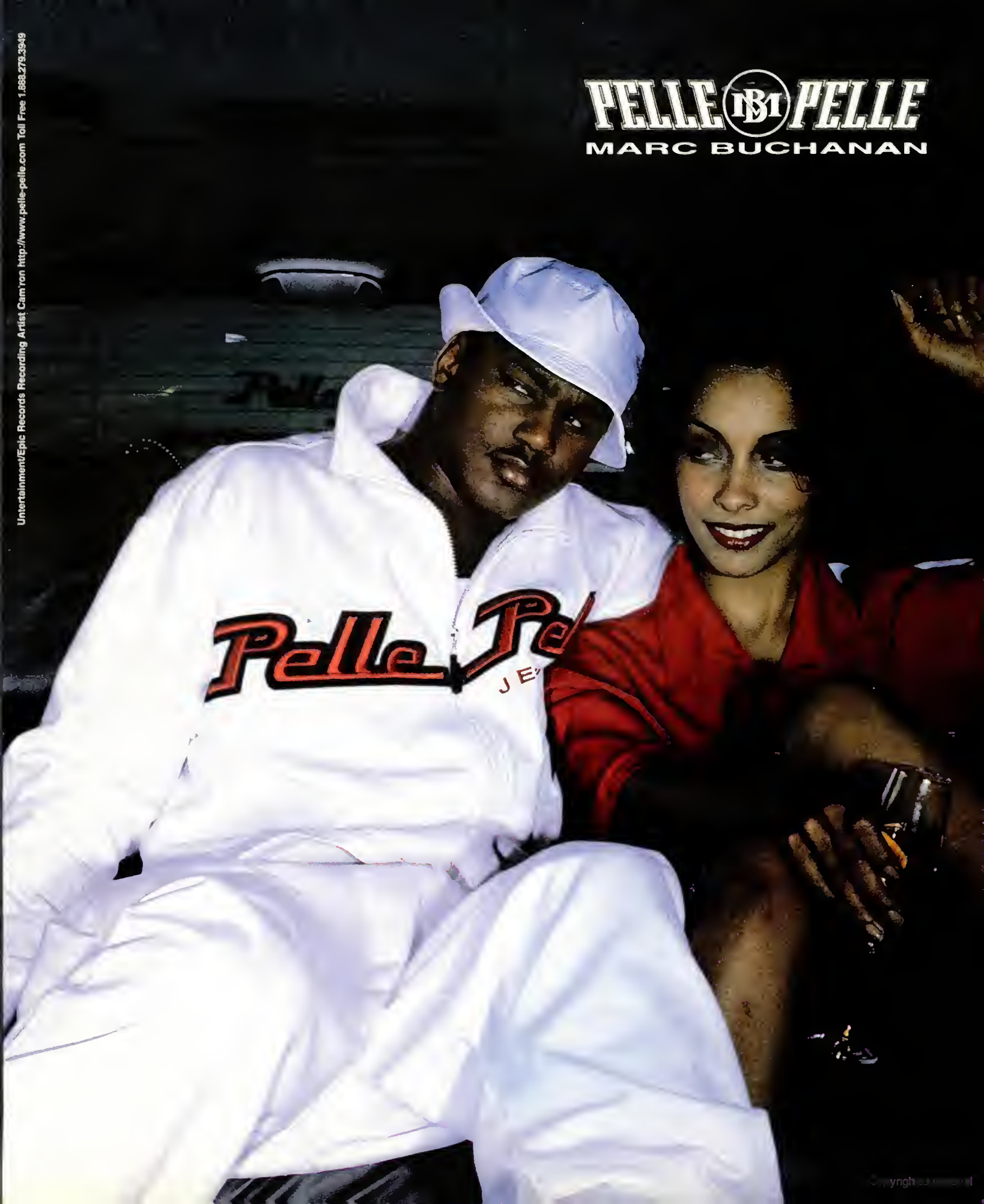
These are good times for Dru Hill. At press time, *Enter the Dru* is in the *Billboard* 's Top Ten. Only a short time ago, the story that surrounded them was the lawsuit their label University Music Entertainment filed against Island, Polygram, and Island Black Music President Hiriam Hicks alleging threats of physical and verbal abuse. Everything is now resolved, although a confidentiality clause attached to the settlement prohibits anyone from talking specifics. "All too often," McMillan says, "these issues are dealt with in different nonlegal proceedings. And for us to have taken on the record company for principles we believed in, to have settled those lawsuits after long and bitter and protracted negotiations, pick up the pins and move forward to create a smashing album is significant. You have many artists for whom everything can go rosy and they still can't deliver an album within a year of their prior release. It is a testament to Dru Hill's character and creativity."

After dinner, Nokio and Woody run through an enormous video arcade, ready for some fun. Like in their earlier conversation, they go at utterly different things: Woody playing Ski-Ball and shooting hoops, Nokio racking up points on the high-tech Le Mans–style driving challenge through treacherous Euro highways. On the way home, Woody does affectionate impersonations of various Baltimore characters. Nokio looks on, nodding his head and grinning. Then his cell phone rings.

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OH, MYA

WHEN MYA HARRISON MAKES MOVES, PEOPLE MOVE OVER. *AMY LINDEN* STEPS ASIDE

Love. It makes the world go round; it's a many splendored thing. Rock n' roll legend Neil Young will swear that it's the only thing that can break your heart; Tina will wonder aloud, What's the heart-shaped word got to do with it? Many have waxed philosophical about this most elusive and essential of emotions, and rhythm and blues hawk Mya is a high-flying newcomer to said flock. Ask the soft-spoken but forthright Washington, D.C. dweller what comes to mind when she thinks about the L-word, and she is more than willing to share some rather choice words of wisdom.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PIOTR SIKORA IN NEW YORK CITY ON NOVEMBER 15, 1998

"Love is life," Mya declares, phoning in from the lonesome void of a promotional date. "You don't want to live without love; everybody yearns to be loved. That's what makes everything happy. You want to feel wanted, accepted." If acceptance on the mass-market scale can qualify as L-O-V-E, then Mya Harrison is one wanted, blown-up baby doll. Her ascension on the charts and into the conscious of the record-buying public has happened both quickly and assuredly.

It was not even a year ago—when her eponymous debut (Interscope) was just hitting the stores—that Mya was loudly being touted as the next big thing. Tack on a few months, a million-plus LP's sold, and it's safe to say that Miss M is now certified *bold*. In an industry that simultaneously eats and promotes its young, the now 19-year-old singer has broken through with a knockout combination: good looks (hey, it doesn't hurt) sex appeal (ditto), silky moves, charm, savvy musical partnerships, and, of course, the big T: talent.

While some might see her frequent and successful team-ups with better-known male performers like Teddy Riley, Mase, and, uh, a Rugrat on "Take Me There" (from the soundtrack for the movie *Rugrats*) as an unfair leg up on the steep ladder to fame and fortune, Mya is clearheaded and downright pragmatic about her current status as the Featured Girl Singer. "It's been great to have the opportunity to work with so many people that are already established...to bring me up. Because I didn't do it by myself," she admits. "It's helped my career. That *is* my career. All I've done so far are collaborations.... It's great to have all these people in my corner, but I yearn for," Mya pauses—long, hard, and serious—"myself. Because I know I can hold my own."

That self-assuredness is testimony to Mya's strong, centered approach to her career and her life—not surprising for a young woman whose namesake is the famously focused Dr. Maya Angelou. Mya Harrison's spotlight dreams began when she was still in elementary school; the eldest of three kiddies (and the only girl), she spent years rigorously studying dance. Mya's hoofing skills eventually led to a residency with the Dance Theater of Harlem, where she had the opportunity to be mentored by yet another established star, tap maestro supreme Savion Glover.

Like many performers who've had their eyes on the prize since shortyhood, Mya is an odd combination of half-giggly post-adolescent and half-cool cell-phone–toting pro. It's that yin/yang personality that lets Mya bump and grind with Sisqo on her breakthrough "It's All About Me," or throw down with Pras and ODB hip hop mafioso–style on "Ghetto Supastar" (Interscope). And although Mya may admit to being "still a kid," she totally knows that her girlish innocence has appeal.

All thoughts of teddy bears and puppy dogs fall by the wayside, however, when Mya is in full flirt mode—like in her videos for "Movin' On" or "It's All About Me." But while she sings love songs that range from you-better-step-asshole sass ("If You Died I Wouldn't Cry Cause You Never Loved Me Anyway") to I'm-crying-in-my-pillow heartbreak (the gentle "If You Were Mine"), it would appear that Mya doesn't practice what she preaches. That's because Mya's never really been in love.

"I have no clue if I've been in love or not," she says. "That's kind of a touchy subject, 'cause I'm just starting. I've never had a boyfriend," she says, breaking up into nervous chuckles. "If you really want to know the truth, I can tell you that I've loved people, but as far as being in love—I'd have to go through a lot to actually understand it. What comes out in my songs is just thinking that you are in love—*feeling* you are—and then getting hurt from it." Girl, don't worry, your time is gonna come.



Mya can sing a lot better than Harrison Ford

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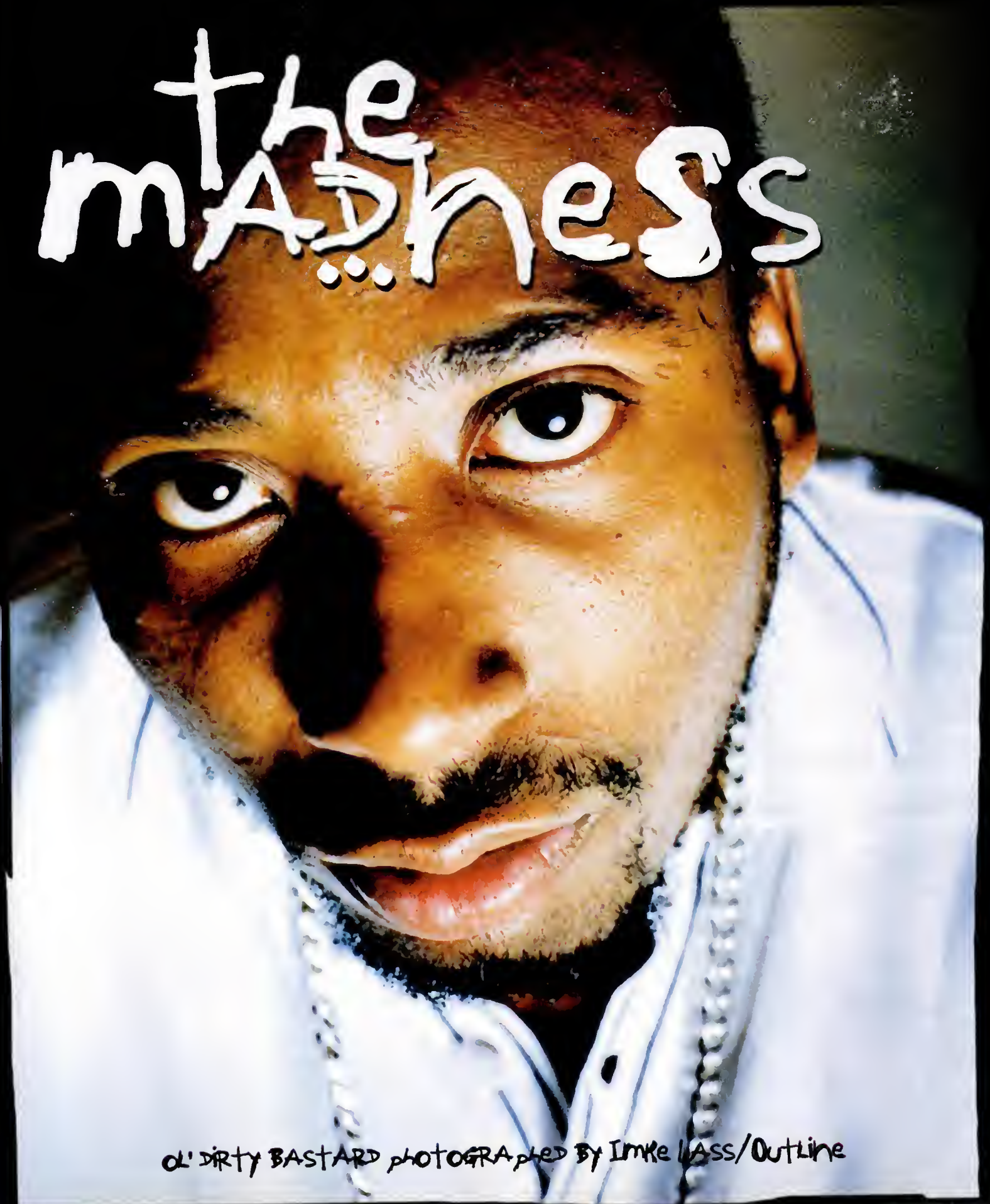


method man photographed by piotr sikora

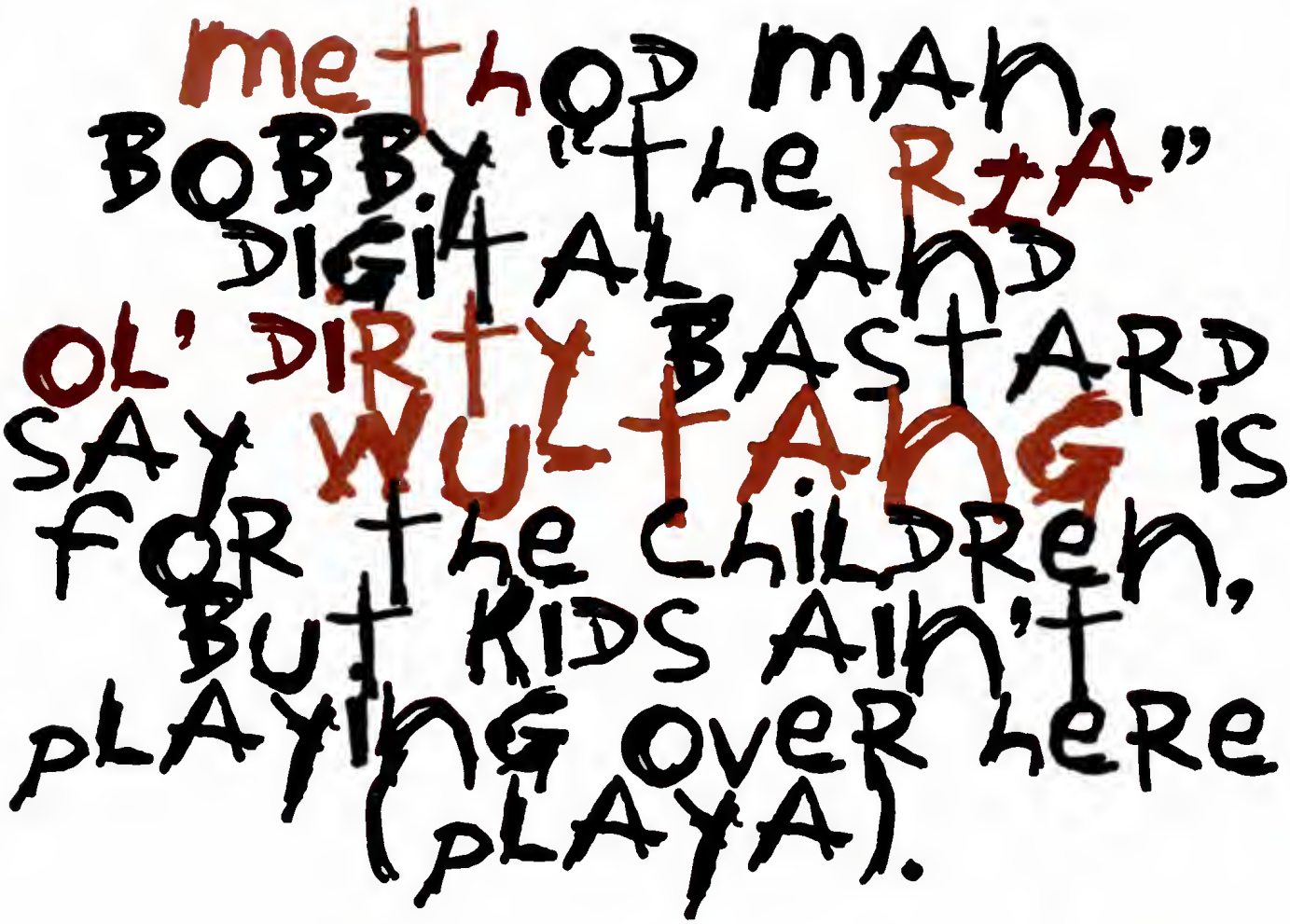


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the madness



OL' DIRTY BASTARD PHOTOGRAPHED BY Imke LASS/Outline



A VIBE CLAN RALLY™

Methodical

BY DAVID BRY



"Hey, Method Man, this is Donald Trump and I'm in Palm Beach and we're all waiting for your album. Let's get going man, everybody's waiting..."

–Donald Trump for Trump Enterprises

"Yo, Meth, I'm telling you right now, man. If you don't give me this fuckin' album, these motherfuckers at Polygram are gonna fuckin' fire me."

–Lyor Cohen for Def Jam Records

"We will sell no wine before its time."

–Orson Welles for Ernest & Julio Gallo

This kid in a red Nautica parka's been standing there for a minute now, staring. It's a cold October afternoon. Method Man and his associate StreetLife are waiting outside a busy Times Square ATM for Heidi, a Def Jam publicist, to get some cash for a trip to the video arcade. The kid's 10 feet away, eyes bugged. Finally, Method turns toward him and shrugs. "Shit, dude. Say *somethin'*. What's up?"

The kid smiles and approaches. "What's up, Meth!"

Meth pulls him in for a hug.

"What're you doing up here?" says the kid, as if they had played handball just last week.

"I'm gettin' ready to rob this lady when she comes out of the ATM," says Meth, nodding at the Citibank doors. Glancing over his shoulder, he pulls a Halloween mask–the one from the movie *Scream*–out of his pocket and stretches it over his head. "You wit' it? You ready?"

The kid's jaw drops and he takes a step back. He looks at the passing pedestrians and lets out a nervous giggle. Just then Heidi comes out of the ATM and walks over, rolling her eyes at Meth's disguise. She hands him the money and asks where the arcade is. Bewildered but relieved, the kid comes back over.

"Meth," he says. "When's the album comin' out?"

"I'm workin' on it right now," says Meth, his voice muffled by the mask.

That was more than a year ago. A sequel to *Scream* and yet another Halloween have come and gone. It's now been four years since his first solo album, 1994's *Tical*, sparked a string of six consecutive gold or platinum discs from members of the Wu-Tang Clan. *Tical* sold a million copies on the strength of killer singles like "Bring the Pain" and "All I Need." A remix of the latter, featuring Mary J. Blige, topped *Billboard*'s pop chart and set a new standard for hip hop love songs.

Let's just say that Method Man is a very important artist. As the most visible member of the greatest–and most elusive–rap crew in history, he's nothing if not in demand. In the last three years alone, he's appeared in five films (*Cop Land*, *The Great White Hype*, *187*, *Rhyme & Reason*, and *Belly*), starred on the quadruple-platinum 1997 epic *Wu-Tang Forever*, and executive-produced a son and a daughter.

"Dada was his first word," Meth says of his two-and-a-half-year-old son, Shakuan, who makes his recording debut on Meth's long-awaited *Tical 2000: Judgement Day*. "Dad, dad, dad–all day. But babies say Dada because their gums be hurtin'."

Meth's daughter, Cheyenne (a.k.a. Pinky Fat Fat) was born in November 1997. "She wakes me up every day at nine-thirty," says Meth, smiling. "She is *bad*. She comes sliding off the bed and comes and crawls all on my face. I'm so at peace in my house, man. Word to God: I love being there."

But raising a family can conflict with a showbiz career. "In my business, you just can't be in the house with your wife and kids all the time. I mean, I could write two or three records about my babies alone. But who's to say that's gonna sell?"

All of which may explain Meth's delays in delivering his second solo album. Judging by the impatient answering machine messages included on the final product, *everyone* has been waiting for *Judgement Day*. But anyone who knows Method Man knows they shouldn't hold their breath. He occasionally indulges in a little marijuana smoking, and he never really seems to be in a hurry. Watch him walk–hat low, eyes glazed, slumped comfortably into himself–through a crowd on 125th Street. The lanky six-foot-four superstar stops to chat with every fan who approaches him, while his handlers check their watches and call by cell phone to postpone his next appointment.

> My eyes was open from a young age to some shit that I shouldn't have seen

Method Man was born in Hempstead, Long Island, the middle child between two sisters. His parents split up when he was four, and he spent the next 10 years shuttling to and from Long Island, Staten Island, Brooklyn, and Indianapolis, where his mother's family lives.

As for his childhood, he says, "Just know this, my eyes was open from a very young age to some shit that I shouldn't have been exposed to."

Despite his tumultuous home life, young Meth excelled in both school and sports–baseball, football, lacrosse, and wrestling. In middle school, he went to live with his mother in Staten Island's Park Hill housing projects, where he met future Wu compatriots Ghostface Killah, Raekwon, and Inspectah Deck.

Kids from Park Hill were bused a half hour to the predominantly white New Dorp High School, which Meth calls "one of the worst fuckin' schools on the planet." He says his brief enrollment there was marred by subtle but pervasive racism. "They wouldn't call you 'nigger' to your face. But they did little shit to let you know exactly where your fuckin' place in society is. You didn't matter. So I would just sit in class, writing rhymes all day. They didn't give a fuck, so I didn't."

Dropping out in the middle of freshman year, Meth got a job painting condominiums for $40 a day. He then put in four years at the Statue of Liberty snack shop, rising to the post of assistant manager. But the refreshment industry couldn't hold him. "He was always an MC," says Park Hill native Mike McDonald, who comanaged Wu-Tang for a time. "I remember him sittin' on top of a parked car, bangin' on the hood and freestyling.... Little Shakuan, that was his name back then. Little Shakuan the Panty Raider."

"I wasn't a *model* assistant manager," says Meth. "I'll tell you that. My calling is hip hop."

Ten P.M. October 12. Soundtrack studios, Manhattan. The atmosphere is that of a dimly lit basement party. Mobb Deep producer Havoc sits at the mixing board, earphones stretched across his shaved head. The ominous synth-string track for *Judgement Day's* Mobb Deep collaboration, "Play IV Keeps," blasts from ceiling-mounted speakers. Busta Rhymes is there. Inspectah Deck. StreetLife. Killah Priest, Prodigal Son, and Dreddy Kruger from Sunz of Man. Various session musicians, managers, and engineers. Crumpled food wrappers, full bottles, empty bottles, and lots of different kinds of smoke.

Meth wears a royal blue New England Patriots jersey, a red White Sox hat, and heavy stubble high on his cheeks. Reciting phrases from songs past and future, he dances through the room. A cluster of keys hanging from his neck jangles softly to the beat. His arm movements are liquid, and he glides slowly across the carpeted floor as if his shoes were made of ball bearings. With casual ease, Meth pops the cap off a Heineken for Prodigal Son, hands him the beer, and breaks into laughter at his own smoothness.

"This beat is nasty," he growls, to no one in particular. Then, suddenly, yelling: "I'm a cowboy / On a steel horse I ride / And I'm wanted / Waaaant-eh-eh-eddd / Dead or alive!" It's Meth's party. And he'll sing Bon Jovi if he wants to.

Passion, personality, and a viscous *flow* for which the term might have been coined–those are the things that make Method Man a superstar. And why he must be included in any discussion of all-time MC titans. And why *Judgement Day* can rock with any hip hop album released this past year.

It's a record for the heads. Rarely melodic, largely devoid of hummable hooks, *Judgement Day* makes few concessions to Meth's pop appeal. The one sung chorus comes courtesy of D'Angelo's sublime vocal chords, on *Judgement Day*'s "Break Ups 2 Make Ups."

Meth knows the all-important secret of rap, maybe of all poetry: that there's as much power in the *sound* of words as in their dictionary definitions. He chooses words for their rhythmic relationships, and often turns meaning on its side. And in the MC's eternal quest to find new ways of talking about oneself, Meth is a grand innovator.

"On this one call me Lee Majors," goes his robot-

ic staccato on *Judgement Day*'s "Elements." "Million Dollar Man / Bionic / Or Professor Chronic." Meth's penchant for name changing provides a formidable cast of ready-for-prime-time action heroes to carry out the daring exploits of his limitless imagination. Ghost Rider. The Panty Raider. Johnny Blaze. The Iron Lung. Ticallion Stallion. Hott Nikkels. If, as Ol' Dirty Bastard once said, "Wu-Tang is for the children," then Meth's music is the new heavy metal. Sonic, sci-fi cinema for a nation of 13-year-old boys. Those scrawny punks—veins raging with hormones, heads full of video-game fantasies—who wish they could shoot laser beams out their eyes, vanquishing their enemies, or snipping bikini straps like Scott Baio in *Zapped!* Awesome, dude!

Midnight. The studio. The mood has grown serious. Now it's work. Guests sit silently on leather couches, heads nodding to Havoc's beat. Method has recorded his first verse, and for the other MCs hoping to appear on the track, the pressure is tangible. Overhead bulbs cast beams of yellow light through the smoke-thick darkness. StreetLife hunches over a spiral notepad at the mixing board, scrawling lyrics in pencil, mouthing the words to himself.

Perched in the room's elevated center console, Meth scoops ice cubes out of a clear plastic cooler and slurps them into his mouth. Swaying his shoulders to and fro, he leans back and watches Inspectah Deck stare at his notebook for five minutes.

"Hit me off with that joint, Deck."

Deck seems frustrated. "Gimme, like, fifteen more minutes," he says, without raising his head.

Meth gets up and joins Street and a studio engineer at the mixing board. Eventually, still looking unsatisfied, Deck pushes his chair back, gets up, and walks into a soundproof chamber separated by plate glass. Shutting the door behind him, he puts his headphones on and adjusts the microphone stand.

On the other side of the window, the engineer cues the crackling beat and presses RECORD. Deck delivers a cluttered, arrhythmic rhyme that doesn't come close to the standard established on classics like "Wu-Tang Clan Ain't Nuthing ta Fuck Wit" and "Reunited."

Shaking his head and frowning, Deck asks for another take. After two more aborted starts, the music stops. Meth leans forward and pushes a glowing button on the board. "That's not workin', Deck."

"What if I slowed it down?" asks Deck.

How much bad music gets made because artists surround themselves with fawning yes-men? It's never been that way with Wu-Tang, though.

"That one's not really workin'," Meth says. "Come on back out here and try again."

"That's my brother. So I gotta respect that," says Deck later. "If he's tellin' me [my verse] is lackin' or that it sounds like I'm readin' it off the paper...That's why I love him, 'cause he'll say that."

"That's how we get down," says Meth. "I'm not gonna let him go into the battle half-armed. He does the same shit to me. If it ain't right, he's gonna let me know. If my breath stink, he's gonna let me know."

Three A.M. The beat has been droning for six hours. Aside from that, the room is quiet. MCs have their pens again, off on mysterious mental journeys. Meth looks up, a quizzical expression on his face. "The flag of Norway got a cross on it, right?"

Someone behind him answers, "Yeah. I think so."

"It's a blue cross?" says Meth. "Sumthin' like that?"

"I think it's a white cross on a blue background."

"Hmmm..." Meth lowers his head to write more.

Deck sits in his chair at the console, brow furrowed, reciting his new rhyme softly to himself.

"Come on, Deck," calls out Wu-Tang manager John "Mook" Gibbons, shifting his weight on the couch. "I'm tryin' to hear that joint before I leave."

"Alright," Deck responds, rising. "I got it."

Back behind the glass, Deck catches the beat and attacks with newfound fervor. "I move like Mad Max 'cross the wasteland / One hand holds the head of the last brave man." Head cocked to the side, feet planted firmly, by the end of the verse he's spitting venom like a cobra. "Get your face blown / Might face the chrome / We take this more serious than just a poem!"

The studio audience erupts into cheers. Folks hold their heads and exchange pounds. Mook gets up, nodding, and gathers his coat. "Whoooo!" Meth spins around in his chair and smiles, excited. "That nigga's nasty! I'ma have to do my verse over after that. 'Cause my shit's not really right!"

Five A.M. It's dark. Most of the guests have left. StreetLife lies on the floor behind the mixing board. Inspectah Deck's curled up in the corner. Killah Priest and Dreddy Kruger slump against each other on a carpeted riser. Prodigal Son stretches out on the couch. The sound of collective snoring can be heard underneath Havoc's track, now on its eighth hour of continuous loop. Meth still sits in his swivel chair, though, one last cone of light shining down on him from overhead. He's still swaying back and forth, still scooping ice cubes, still writing rhymes.

"What time is it?" asks a voice from the darkness.

"Like... five," comes an answer, with a yawn.

"I'm here till noon today," says Meth, rolling his neck. "Fuck y'all..."

ALTERED STATES BY ELLIOTT WILSON



I could freestyle all night, son." Pouncing around New York's Hot 97 studios, the artist most commonly known as the RZA can't wait to grab the microphone and bless the tristate area with the poetics that wreak havoc inside his mind. For the last hour and a half, DJ Funkmaster Flex has been back-spinning nothing but highlights from the Wu's musical catalog. Wait...it's time for another on-air check-in.

"Yo, this is Bobby Digital here," RZA says, "and all you *analog* cats can't comprehend these frequencies. So you might as well low-transmit yourself outta here. Get outta here, you derelicts." Bobby what? Digital *who*? Confused? Don't be. We already know that when it comes to the Clan and aliases, anything can happen (See Raekwon's 1996 banger, *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*). Yes indeed, for those of you searching for the truth, here's a platinum nugget: Bobby Digital and the RZA are one and the same. Well...sort of.

I LIKE LA..'CAUSE I CAN LIVE MORE OF A REGULAR LIFE THERE. N.Y.C. WAS GETTING SO PLAYED OUT TO ME THAT IT GOT ME NAUSEOUS.

The RZA is usually behind the scenes, making beats, guiding the Wu's moves. But on *Bobby Digital in Stereo* (Gee Street/V2) the RZA (oops, I mean, Mr. Digital) steps away from behind the boards and into the limelight. With his first "solo" album already stocking the shelves of your local retailer and still another—*RZA's the Cure*—slated to drop this spring, this mad scientist is racing to save us all from the deadly virus some call hip pop. Maybe he'll overturn the decks that spin champagne rap on the radio. Maybe he'll flip the commercial formula, pepper it with a heavy dose of those treacherous Wu seasonings. Then he'll laugh. Who's gonna stop Bobby Digital?

What made you decide to focus on being an artist?

After we finished 1997's *Wu-Tang Forever* (Loud), I knew it was time for me to go back to MCing. I've always had the hunger to rhyme; I just suppressed it. With so many dope MCs around you in the Wu-Tang, it don't take a nigga like me to speak. But right now hip hop is so bugged out that it's time [for people] to hear my side of the story. So I decided to break my shit down to two different chambers. First, I'm dealing with my youthful side—like when I was 18, 19. That's Bobby Digital—me just rhyming and bragging.

How did you come up with the name? Did you know about the dancehall producer who had the name first?

I didn't know about him. I had the name for about six months before I found out about it. The name came to me like a thief in the night. My name is Robert Diggs. Bobby Diggs. Bobby Digital. I'm paying total homage to my childhood. Comic books.

Didn't you record a lot of the album in California?

Yeah, I went to L.A. last year to live for half the year. There I reverted back to how I used to live—the Bobby Digital lifestyle. Wherever I walked there was nothing but bitches on my dick and niggas trying to check my style. I was wearing the mix-matched shoes with the matching hat and fly suits with glasses. That's how I used to dress when I was younger. See these kind of glasses [he pulls a pair of DKNY frames off his mug]? These cost, like, two hundred dollars and me and Ol' Dirty used to steal them. Now, I use my credit card. But I like L.A. 'cause I can live more of a regular life there. N.Y.C. was getting so played out to me that the shit got me nauseous.

What do you mean?

The whole scene. You go to a club and you see all these derelict-ass niggas trying to shine. Fake niggas. All the real niggas don't even come outside anymore 'cause you can't get in with your hood, your sneakers, or your Timbs. I was like, Fuck these niggas, they analog right now. It's time for them to get digital.

Yeah, on the radio tonight, you constantly referenced analog and digital. What's the deal?

Analog is like low frequency—muthafuckas that ain't clear. CDs are clear. Digital quality is clear. Digital is also dealing with mathematics. Digits. Analog means old. Past. Muffled. Niggas [in New York] are muffled but they're thinking that they shining. New York was analog to me when they started to have other niggas influence them. L.A. rappers are doin' bad-ass shit right now and New York niggas is imitating them and using their slang. Or they're imitating Wu-Tang shit. I get frustrated sometimes 'cause N.Y.C. niggas is turning back the hands of time when we already cleared the path. But then again, it's [Wu-Tang's] fault 'cause we started it with *Cuban Linx*. But we didn't expect other rap niggas to go and copy our style so much. That's why the same niggas that bought *Cuban Linx* bought *Forever* looking for that *Cuban Linx* shit, and there was very little of it on there.

This album has a lot of sexual references. It's almost like Bobby's...a playa.

[*Laughs*] Yeah, that was my mentality back in the day. A slick majestic nigga, that's what they called me. I kept a lot of birds—I still got a lot of birds. Bobby keeps the birds in the cage, knawmean? Bobby Digital is reaching out for the bitches, but I still had to show niggas that I'm one of the illest niggas to talk on the mike. I'm gonna show niggas over sixteen different styles. I got a book of seven hundred rhymes, and my vocabulary is the best of all MCs.

What's your relationship like now with other members of the Clan?

I always keep abreast with what's going on. Most [of the Wu] stay in tune with me, reach out to me, see how I'm feeling. A few...you won't hear from them for a month. But it was planned that way. We actually sat down in a room and said, Yo, everybody go 'head, we'll meet back in 2000. That's why I didn't produce all the albums this time around. Everybody's grown. Niggas are now masters of their own chambers.

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY BY MIKE RUBIN



It seems like barely a day goes by without another report of one of Ol' Dirty Bastard's bizarre antics. Hip hop's most irrepressible personality has been in and out of mischief faster than you can say "Flavor Flav." So whether you call him Russell Jones, Osirus, Dirt Megirt, DJ Coolie Hot, Big Baby Jesus, or just plain Dirty, if you like the man who likes it raw, then it's time to enter the 36 chambers of...criminal court:

November 1994: ODB is charged with burglary after crawling through the doggy door of a home in Richmond Hill, Queens. "He claimed he was being chased," says a police spokesman. Less than a week later, Dirty is shot once in the stomach on a Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn street after an argument about music. "It was a rappers' quarrel," says a police spokesman. Dirty later says that snipers were "aiming at my spleen because the spleen is your earth."

April 1995: While taping an "MTV News" segment, Dirty reveals that he's been "burned by gonorrhea" not once but twice, then allows the crew to accompany him to a local check-cashing place, where he picks up his monthly allotment of food stamps. MTV follows the footage by pointing out that Dirty had received $45,000 in advances from Elektra for his solo album *Return to the 36 Chambers: The Dirty Version*, the cover of which featured a doctored version of his welfare card.

July 1996: During a performance by the Roots at New York's Irving Plaza, ODB commandeers the microphone to deliver an incoherent rant about having sex with women on their period. Dirty refuses to relinquish the mike, then gets into two brief scuffles with members of the Roots crew. "When he said this line about 'that bitch with her menses,' " says one disgusted concert attendee, "you could see everyone in the audience put their head in their hands."

December 1997: ODB pleads guilty to a 1996 charge of driving without a license and agrees to pay a $225 fine. Dirty tells reporters, "I don't have any comment, but I do love you, though."

February 1998: At the 40th annual Grammy Awards, ODB bum-rushes the stage during the presentation of the Song of the Year award to Shawn Colvin to protest Sean "Puffy" Combs's victory over Wu-Tang Clan in the Best Rap Album category. "I went and bought me an outfit today that cost me a lot of money, because I figured that Wu-Tang was gonna win." And then: "Wu-Tang is for the children." Dirty later says of his impromptu appearance, "Something just jumped into my blood."

AS HE LEAVES THE COURTROOM, DIRTY TELLS REPORTERS, "I DON'T HAVE ANY COMMENT, BUT I DO LOVE YOU, THOUGH"

April 1998: Dirty announces that he's changing his name to "Big Baby Jesus." "No more ODB, no more Osirus, that's all lies," he declares. "Don't kill me, because you know you all love me."

July 1998: ODB is shot once during a push-in robbery at his cousin's Brooklyn apartment. Two men steal an unspecified amount of Dirty's money and jewelry, shooting him in the back as they flee. Hours after being admitted to a local hospital, Dirty gathers his things and leaves through an emergency exit, setting off an alarm. "He's quite a character," says a hospital spokesperson.

Three days later, ODB celebrates Independence Day by being arrested for shoplifting at a Virginia Beach, Va., Sneaker Stadium after a surveillance camera allegedly captures him liberating a pair of size 11 Nikes from their box, putting them on, and attempting to walk out of the store wearing the $50 shoes.

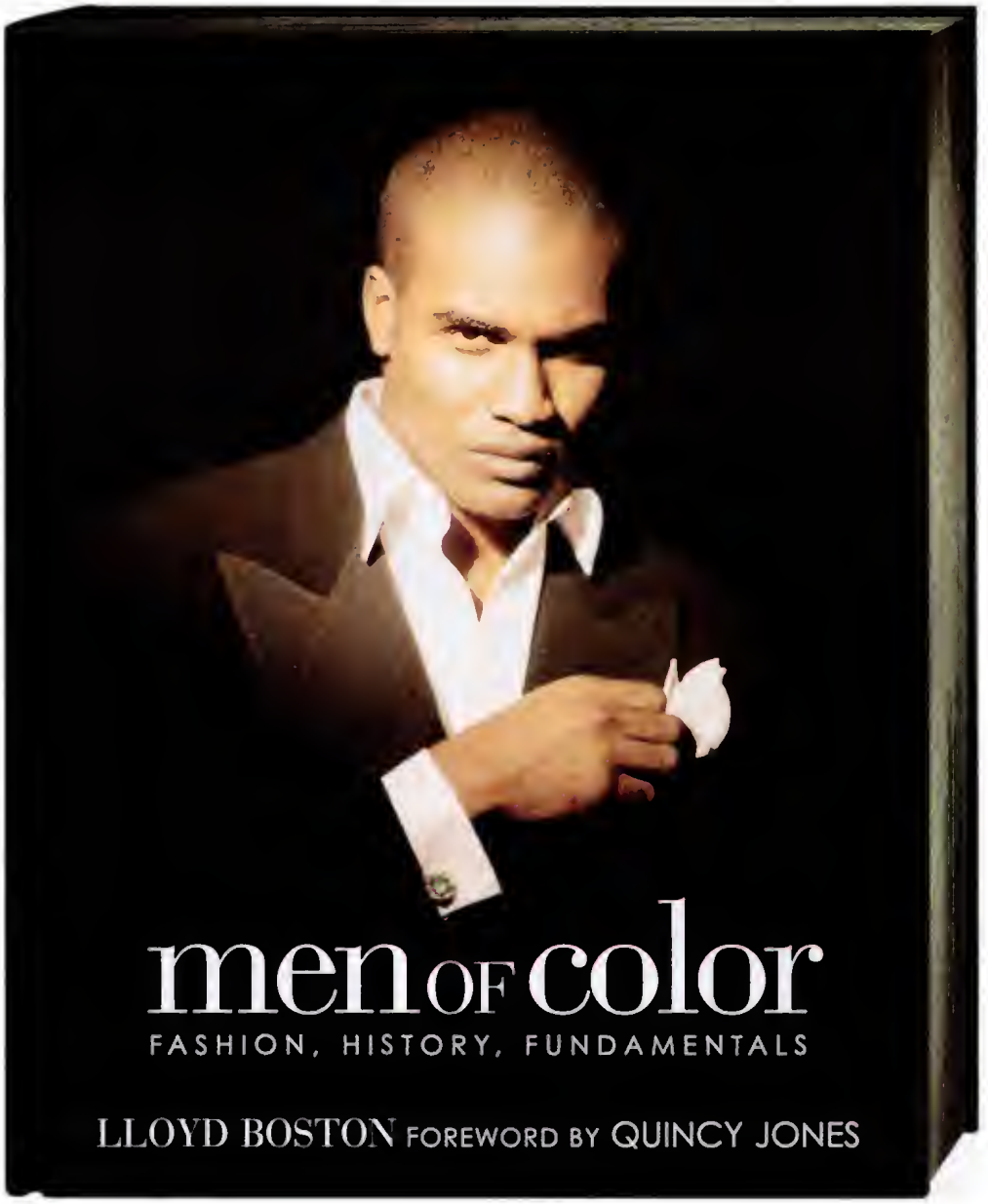
August 1998: A Virginia judge issues three arrest warrants for ODB after he misses his third consecutive court date on the shoplifting charge. Dirty's lawyer claims that a heavy thunderstorm prevented Dirty from flying to one court appearance, and that he missed two separate planes for the others when he was "not allowed" to board.

September 1998: ODB is arrested outside the House of Blues club in West Hollywood, Calif., and charged with "making terrorists threats" after he promised to "shoot and kill" bouncers who kicked him out of the club during a Des'ree concert. A week later, ODB is ejected from the Four Seasons Hotel in Berlin for "lewd behavior" after guests complained that he was lounging on his balcony in the nude.

November 1998: ODB is arrested for allegedly threatening to kill his former girlfriend, when deputies stop him as he attempts to climb over a security gate onto the Carson, Calif., property where his ex was working. The woman, mother of one of Dirty's 13 children, had notified authorities that he was on the way over. Dirty is held on $500,000 bail for investigation of making terrorist threats.

All told, at press time Dirty has charges in California, Virginia, and New York that have yet to be resolved. "I think he's going to be okay," says Peter Frankel, Dirty's New York attorney, "I don't foresee him having to do any jail time. He's really a great guy, he's just misunderstood." V

From Basie to Biggie, the first full-color history of Black male style.



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LLOYD BOSTON FOREWORD BY QUINCY JONES

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ARTISAN

With a chrome German helmet on his head, fuzzy slippers on his feet, and a quarter-ton Suzuki between his legs, Winky rules New York's biker underground. *Vulcan* rides shotgun to find out what makes a man risk his life just to "throw it crazy."

wheels of steel



PHOTOGRAPHS BY WALTER SMITH/VUE

With the throttle pinned open and the brakes engaged, Winky's motorcycle screams at the redline, begging for the torture to stop. He and his adversary are barely visible through thick white smoke as they circle each other at daringly close range. The assembled crowd protect their noses against the choking fog. Suddenly a female fan hops onto the passenger's seat of Winky's blue and white 1100 and refuses to get off. Gentleman that he is, Winky allows her to ride along while all hell breaks loose.

How did we get to this point? A legal stunt competition sponsored by a local motorcycle shop had just taken place across the river in New Jersey. Trophies were awarded for the best burnouts, wheelies, and endos (see sidebar on page 106). Every top street rider in the tristate area was there—except one. Winky missed the event while waiting for a truck to transport his bike, so he did the next most ghetto fabulous thing: He lurked by the exit ramp, figuring that "whoever comes back with a trophy has to see me when they get back to New York."

Flex, the burnout division winner, rolled off the highway first. His red Kawasaki ZX7 started to dance, and the engine noise was deafening. He was a respected friend, but Winky jumped in the beef on general principle.

No time for indecision. The ZX7 rider eases off the gas for a second, losing momentum. Winky's death blows come fast and



furious: doughnuts into spaghetti, deadman into endo into one-handed spaghetti into a move Winky calls Aunt Millie's, an all-out assault on pavement and engine life. Spectators who get too close feel the melting rubber spit from the balding tire. A plush carpet of toxic fumes envelops the battle-scarred blacktop. This contest is over. The engine noise dissolves to the sound of cheering fans and car alarms activated by the decibel overload. Welcome to the world of urban assault biking, better known as getting down.

"On the streets this isn't a sport. It's a lifestyle," says Winky. "Every block is *my house*. I will rip it, strip it, and burn your house down. Nobody's gonna come out of the woodwork and say he beat me in a street battle."

With the kind of confident intensity that would strike fear in the iceberg heart of Frank White, Winky has been known as the "King of New York" for more than a decade. For the last three years, the crown was awarded through officially sponsored grudge matches held at a Long Island raceway. But Winky's no less proud of the school where his skills were developed—on the grimy pavement of New York, pit-fighting all comers in unauthorized duels. As King, he sometimes leads "parades" throughout the city; on a good day, 200 riders will come to floss.

"There's a segment of the population that has more hormones pumping through their brains than sense," says Mark Kalan, editor and publisher of the New York–based periodical *City Cycle*. "We have to have an outlet for them." Kalan calls Winky "one of the best I've ever seen." But not everybody agrees: One motorcycling vet who insisted on anonymity calls Winky and his comrades "a bunch of stupid assholes—they don't wear safety gear or full-face helmets. They're gonna hurt themselves real bad one day."

The first time you see him in the video for DMX's "Ruff Ryders' Anthem," Winky's on the Bruckner Expressway doing 90 miles an hour on his rear wheel. His front tire is pointing skyward, his body perfectly balanced at an impossible angle.

A few seconds later, there he is again, nearly vertical, sitting on the gas tank with his legs dangling over the handlebar while he steers his shrieking Suzuki on a terrifying rear-wheel excursion. Whizzing through traffic, Winky looks so relaxed he could be sipping coffee in his robe and slippers—in fact, he does ride in bedroom attire now and then. Why? Because he *can*. "I have a special connection with the bikes," says the nonchalant ninja. "I've made them an extension of my mind, body, and balls."

Winky thrives on a steady diet of octane and adrenaline. The charismatic 29-year-old Harlemite is the premier gladiator in a subterranean realm where the quest for flyness is the prime directive. Evel Knievel–type notoriety beyond the underground is not an aspiration. "Holdin' down the streets is how I eat," says Winky, who must keep his true identity secret to avoid police interference. When he isn't battling for bikes and respect, Winky holds down a child-care job and polishes rims to finance his passion. As he says, "Street-level love is all I'm lookin' for."

For the last eight years, Winky has shared his two-wheeled love affair with a fly, fearless woman named Yayi [pronounced ja-ji]. Far from a groupie, Yayi had a bike before she met him on the get-down circuit.

"At first, Wink didn't really approach me 'cause when I ride I just like to be one of the guys," says the shapely part-time model. "I asked him to take me for a ride," she remembers. "He threw it up and when it came down, the frame broke. It was a really scary feeling, but I didn't get hurt." They were married in 1995.

Yayi says she doesn't get scared anymore when she rides with Wink, and she couldn't be more supportive of his chosen passion. "I just wanna keep progressing and getting better," she says. "We could be 85 years old doing wheelies."

But this is not a lifestyle that promotes longevity. Other than Wink's chromed replica of a World War II German helmet, there are no uniforms or protective gear. In fact, the less protection a rider wears, the more accolades will be bestowed after a successful maneuver. Two thousand–dollar leather suits, face guards, and body armor are mere signs of insecurity here. Simply put: If you fuck up, you get fucked up!

Every summer, black lines of burnt rubber scar the sweltering streets of East New York, Brooklyn; Jamaica, Queens; Harlem; and the South Bronx. In this realm, hip hop beats compete with the roar of high-performance engines. Wherever you go, the action is the same: Rumors circulate about who can do what, a little mud gets slung, and it's time for beef.

Unlike its ghetto-born cousins—emceeing, B-boying, deejaying—getting down is not considered an integral part of hip hop culture. But thanks to pioneers like Winky, it has become a battle sport demanding a combination of show-me-what-you-got skills and improvisational artistry. DMX and Ja Rule both ride,









Wink, continued from page 99

while Method Man, Jay-Z, and DJ Clue have all recently bought bikes. "It just takes you away from the everyday," says Clue. "When you're stressed you could get on your bike and ride. It makes you feel dangerous." Though he used to do "anything to get wild," the respected mix-tape DJ has chilled out a bit of late. "I can't afford to break my hand from no shit like that," he says.

For true heads, there is no greater honor than sporting the traditional chrome German helmet—first popularized by Harlem-to-Jersey D'Angelo and Alpo—which must be defended like any other badge of pride. If you can't do a wheelie for at least two blocks, prepare to get your helmet snatched. Throwing it crazy—aggressive riding with cuts—is the main objective, and there is no practice except what the streets and the police will allow. Cops can confiscate bikes for a single count of reckless endangerment, and Winky has much experience dealing with police pursuits.

EASY RIDER:
This is how Winky gets down

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"I'D LET THEM SET THE BONES AND PUT A CAST ON. THEN I'D CUT IT OFF, WRAP THE BREAK IN ACE BANDAGES, AND LET IT HEAL THAT WAY. I STILL HAVE TROUBLE WITH MY WRISTS, BUT THAT'S WHAT I HAD TO DO TO KEEP ON RIDING."

One officer used to chase Winky every day on the way home from his day job. "It got so bad," he says, "I had to do something. I had a helmet custom painted to say FUCK THE POLICE. Then I'd go look for him!" This continued for a couple of months until one evening when Winky was hanging out with some friends. "I see this guy in regular clothes walking toward me with two big bodyguard types," he recalls. "I caught an instant case of diarrhea." He recognized it was the cop he'd been toying with, but something told him to stand his ground. "He said, 'Hi Winky,' and I said, 'Do you want to take my bike?' He said, 'Nah. I just wanna talk about getting a bike and riding with y'all.'"

Winky got started in his early teens, practicing tricks on borrowed bikes when others were into racing and jumping on their bikes. Not even his riding partners suspected that he could develop the "kid stuff" into a style of his own, much less a career. Some racers have managed to eke out a living on two wheels, but it's not easy getting a sponsor for outlaw stunt riding. Winky's been approached by FUBU clothing and Ruff Ryders Entertainment, which produced the DMX video. He soon hopes to begin selling his self-produced video, *Winky Off the Hook*. But his heart belongs to the streets. "A smile is everything to me," he says. "If somebody smiles because of something I did on a bike, I'm living."

"I've broken my shoulder, leg, and both wrists," Winky says when quizzed about injuries. Most of these mishaps took place while he was still in high school. "If Moms knew I got hurt," he says, "there would have been no more bikes—period." So he found ways to conceal the damage. "I'd go to the hospital, let them set the bones and put a cast on," he recalls. "Then I'd cut it off, wrap the break in Ace bandages, and let it heal that way. I still have trouble with my wrists sometimes, but that's what I had to do to keep on riding."

Mention falling today and Winky says, "It won't be me. It might be somebody, but it won't be me." And it's not like he's just trying to psych himself up. He really seems to believe he's impervious. He admits that his family wants him to "hang up his keys" and pursue his health care studies. "They realize that God has taken care of me for many years on these bikes," he says. "But things do happen."

This past July, one of Winky's protégés was killed in action after running into a wall in Brooklyn. There were no witnesses. "I was the last one to see Tito," Winky said just hours before he attended the 19-year-old's funeral. "Spent the day teaching him how to put it on somebody," he added, speaking softly. "He was just a kid. And he was a good rider."

"That's the most dangerous stretch of life," Winky continued, reflecting on the recent tragedy. "When you're young, the shit you gotta look out for is not the trick shit. You'll get caught by an open car door, an 18-wheeler makin' a wide turn, or the Chinese food delivery scooter lookin' for an address. That's what's unique about all this," he added. "Most of the guys you see in magazines are doing their shit on country roads in England. Doing it in the streets is what makes it dangerous, but also what makes it fly."

Back underneath the West Side Highway, the crowd is swarming the burnout combatants when a police car pulls up. The cops attempt to block the path of a Yamaha banshee in the crowd. (Generally, these four-wheel ATV's, or all-terrain vehicles, are illegal on city streets.) Its pilot quickly kick-starts the engine and slithers around the driver's side of the oncoming police car—the chase is on!

As the banshee turns a corner with cops in hot pursuit, Wink's next unwitting challenger arrives. E.D., a respected veteran from Washington Heights, pulls up with bike on truck and three-foot trophy in hand. Dominican riders from the Heights are well known for their skills, and this rider—who has just won the endo division—represents their cream.

Without a trace of hesitation, Winky steps to him while his fans verbally instigate the battle. There seems to be a language barrier, so Winky points at the trophy. The title holder pulls back and shakes his head, his grip tightening. Now he understands. Winky has been waiting for three hours. A get-down session is going to happen, one way or the other. This is beef.

With the smell of fronting in the air, Winky jumps back into the saddle of his war-weary 1100. Its rear tire is "growing hair" from the burnout confrontation. Versace shades dangling from his teeth, Wink rips a flawless croissant, motioning with his free hand for the other rider to come on.

Soon, the Dominican don's immaculate red-white-and-blue 600 Honda rolls off the truck. He answers with an attempted croissant followed by a long and impressive butter roll. The crowd is feeling him.

Just then the banshee rider blasts back onto the strip, minus the trailing sirens and lights. The onlookers acknowledge his return as he busts a couple of victory doughnuts. A small army of officers should be on their way to stop the fun any minute, but no one dares to leave. This match is history in the making.

Both machines come in side by side, coasting silently. Winky brings the back end of his bike into the air a fraction of a second before the 600's, then they glide to a near dead heat. These riders are making the impossible look effortless.

Winky grabs two full-grown buddies from the crowd and rides away with them sitting behind him. Bystanders tingle with anticipation: Will this be a case of an egomaniac overstepping his capabilities? The 1100 with the hairy rear tire and three on board barrels into the now silent center of the beef. Moving at approximately 70 miles per hour, Winky applies the brakes, shifts his body weight, and *lifts* the 1100's rear end into the sky. Winky's two passengers reach out to touch the clouds and the bike seems to blossom with human limbs.

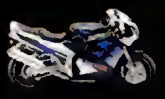
As the crowd starts to react, the bike's angle of attack gets even more vertical. Winky hits a perfect 12 o'clock and holds it for what seems like an eternity, then sticks a landing worthy of Mary Lou Retton. Trophy or no trophy, the beef is over. Opposing factions unite in a frenzy of disbelief and amazement. Long live the king. Hopefully.

Vehicular Vernacular

Do you know what it means to *get down*? Urban motorcycle stunts fall into three main categories: **wheelies** (tricks performed with the front wheel in the air); **burnouts** (tricks performed while holding the front brake and spinning the back wheel until it smokes); and **endos** (tricks performed while balanced on the front wheel only). We've all seen riders who can pop a wheelie. But if you're mystified at the mention of "dranos," "butter rolls," or "Aunt Millie's," then read on.

Road rash: missing paint or skin resulting from an unplanned collision with pavement

Kickstand mawfuckers: people who have nice bikes but do nothing with them



1100: Suzuki GSX-R1100, the preferred vehicle for getting down

Banshee: four-wheel high-performance ATVs. These vehicles are part of the whole get down lifestyle, but they are in a class of their own.

12 o'clock whirlpool: to have the wheel as close to vertical as possible during a wheelie or endo

Butter roll: endo where the bike continues to roll on the front wheel before stopping

Croissant: one-handed butter roll

Doughnuts: burnt-rubber circles drawn on pavement using the back wheel

Growing hair: tire damage resulting from too many burnouts—the rubber tread melts away to reveal fraying nylon threads underneath

Spaghetti: squiggly black lines caused by quick changes of direction during a burnout

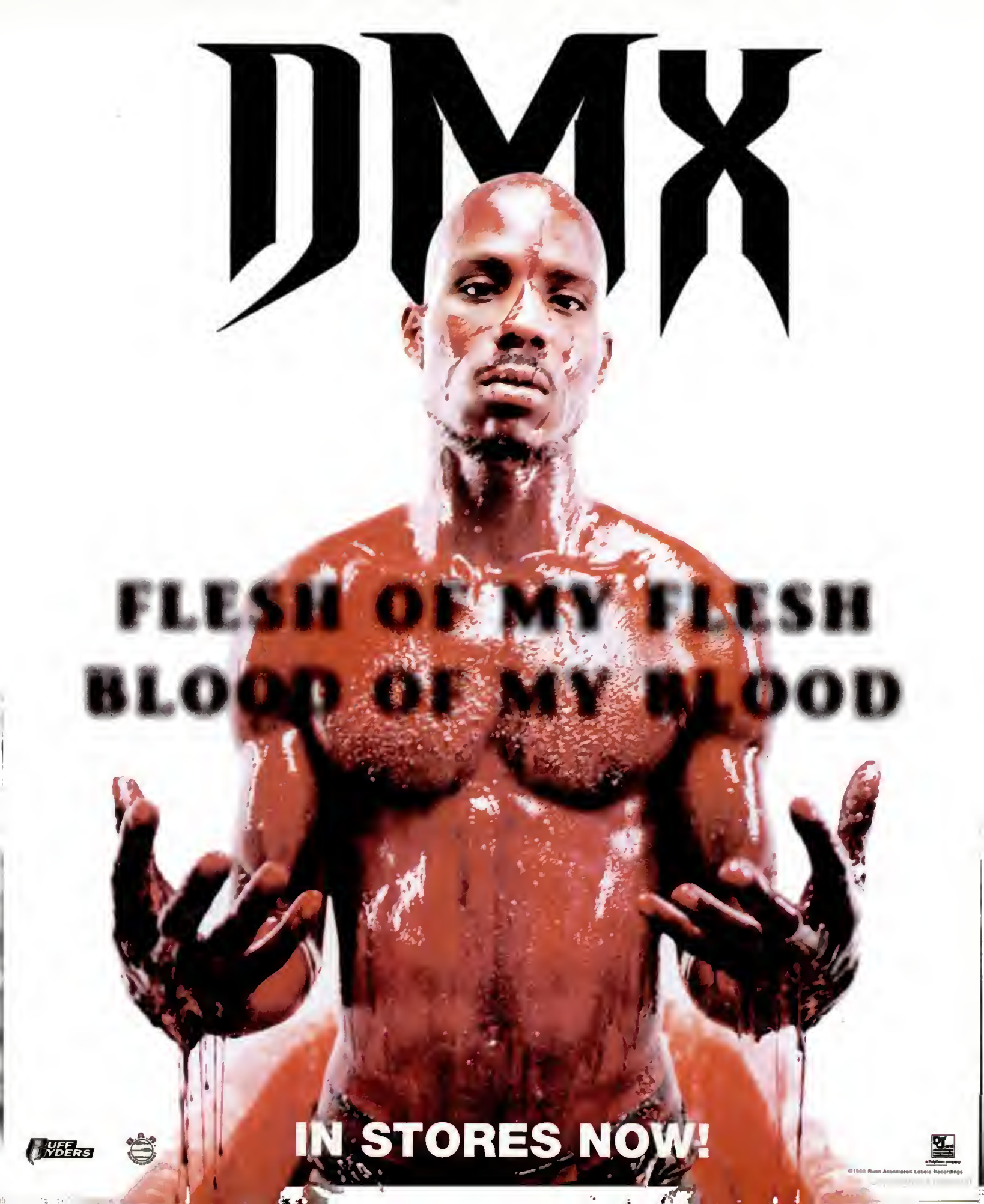
Aunt Millie's: burnout taken to an extreme
("First you put the spaghetti down, then you spill the Aunt Millie's on top.")

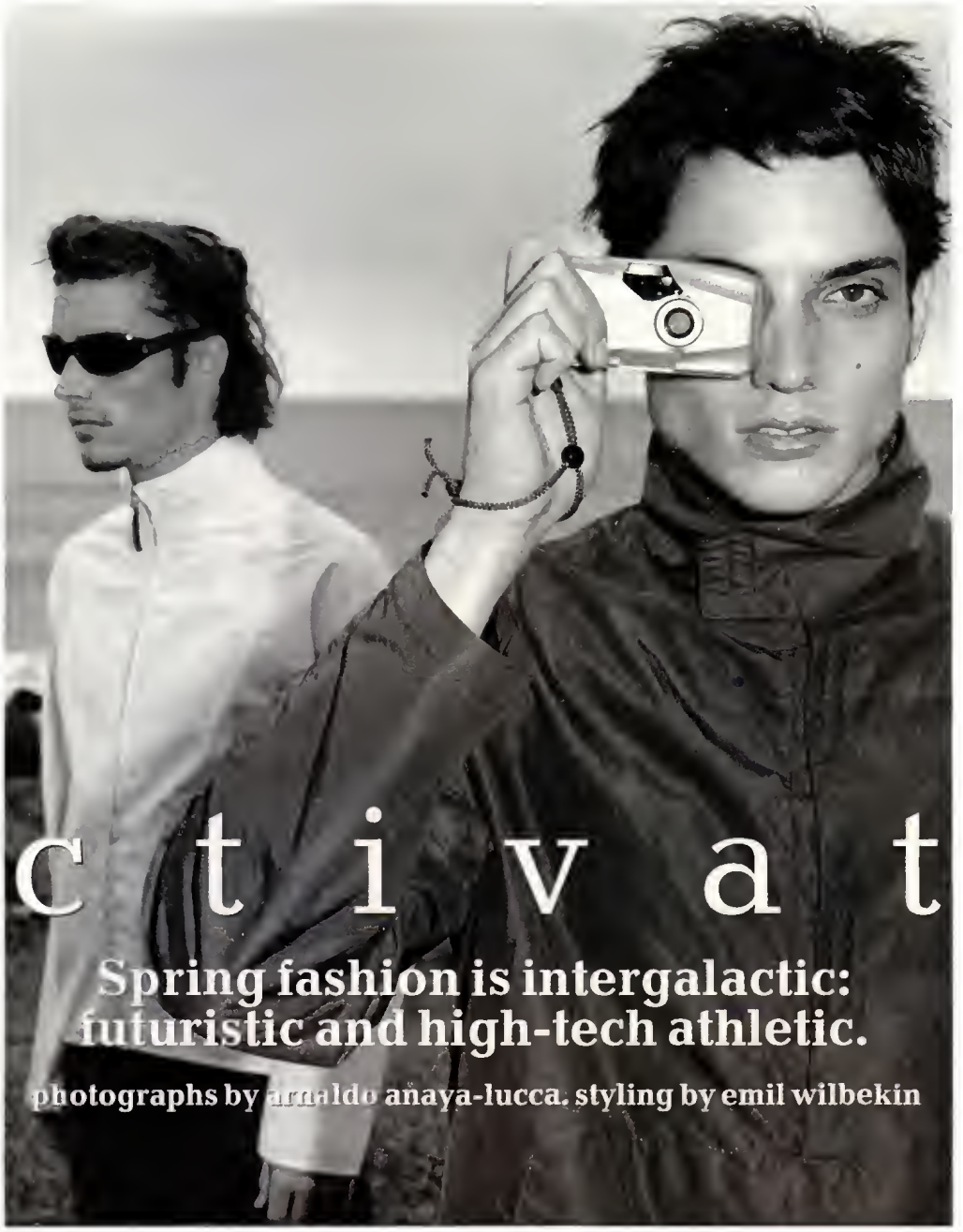
Whirlpool: spinning an 1100 around (usually with a passenger) while burning out

Drano: spinning a banshee while standing at 12 o'clock

Dead man: coming out of a burnout, going into an endo, then killing the motor with the gas wide open, causing the engine to backfire like a sonic boom

For more information, contact: HARLEM HILLS RIDER, P.O. BOX 480, 125TH STREET STATION, HARLEM, N.Y. 10027


DMX
FLESH OF MY FLESH
BLOOD OF MY BLOOD
IN STORES NOW!
RUFF RYDERS
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a c t i v a t e

Spring fashion is intergalactic: futuristic and high-tech athletic.

photographs by arnaldo anaya-lucca. styling by emil wilbekin

GROOMING BY XAVIER SOTO FOR XAVIER & ASSOC.



Opposite page: *Ivory cotton, polyester, and acetate zip-front convertible jacket by New York Industrie; sunglasses by Blind; charcoal cotton and nylon pullover jacket with Velcro closures by Cerruti Arte; camera by Olympus Stylus Epic DLX*

This page: *Top to bottom: White long-sleeve wool and cotton T-shirt with red and white stripes and navy polyamide ripstop pant, both by Byblos; aqua socks by Nike; navy cotton hooded sweater and white cotton poplin torrence flight pant, both by Polo Ralph Lauren; aqua socks by Nike*



Navy cotton double-knit jacket, navy cotton twill pant, and shoes, all by Calvin Klein; navy rayon hooded zip-front jacket and navy rayon sweat pants, both by Emporio Armani



White sheer cotton and silk boatneck sweater and green cotton rollneck sweater, both by Calvin Klein



From left: White cotton and resin hooded zip-front polo tunic, beige cotton and silk pant, and boots, all by CoSTUME NATIONAL HOMME; pebble rubberized hooded jacket and pebble drawstring pant, both by DKNY; shoes by Rockport



From left: Charcoal gray hooded rubberized linen jacket and black rubberized linen pant, both by Nicole Farhi; black nylon and polyester zip-front hooded jacket, black viscose, wool, and nylon short, and boots, all by CoSTUME NATIONAL HOMME; vintage binoculars



From left: Gray high-collar rubberized linen jacket, white cotton sleeveless T-shirt, and white rubberized linen pant, all by Nicole Farhi; gray polypropalene boatneck sweater, charcoal-coated cotton-blend hooded jacket with drawstrings, and light gray cotton canvas twill knee-length flat-front short, all by Richard Edwards; shoes by Nicole Farhi



Black hooded nylon zip-front pullover and white V-neck T-shirt, both by DKNY. **SEE THE DETAILS**



DJS IN PJS
(From left) DJ Clue, Funkmaster Flex, DJ Nabs, Kid Capri, and Doo Wop keep the party moving



don't sleep

What happens when five of hip hop's best DJs come to rock the party—in their pj's?

It's off the hook, of course!

Photographs by Jerome Albertini. Styling by Kadi Agüeros and Katina Lee

Last night a DJ saved my life!

Actually, *five* DJs. I was dreaming about the hottest pajama party in the world—everybody was there. Funkmaster Flex, legendary N.Y.C. spin wizard, was playing his latest and "last" mix tape, *Volume III, The Final Chapter* (Loud/RCA). Flex started yelling into the mike about being "nervous," and before he blasted off, he introduced his protégé, Doo Wop, real "easy." Then Kid Capri jumped on the wheels and started playing his debut, *Soundtrack to the Streets* (Columbia), featuring KRS-One, Snoop Dogg, and Slick Rick. The crowd was going crazy. Camisoles were flying. It was *bananas*. Next to the turntables was DJ Nabs—straight from the ATL. He started mixing and scratching *his* new album, *In the Lab With DJ Nabs—The Live Album* (Columbia), and was really giving up that old-school feeling. And just when the crowd thought it couldn't take anymore, DJ Clue stepped up to the plates and started spinning his new album, *The Professional* (Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam), and got the party open with original songs from Jay-Z and Big Pun. I stood in awe watching all these amazing DJs turn the party out. I rapped with Kid Capri and he said: "DJs have been important since the beginning of hip hop. I rock as hard as any artist when I'm on the stage." And as I stand the sole witness to this amazing dream, I realize he was absolutely correct. What a fabulous night! *Emil Wilbekin*

From left: Jade floral-print nylon tank top, jade floral-print nylon boxer shorts, jade polyrib tank top, and jade polyrib u-kini, all by GUESS? Underwear; blue and white long-sleeve cotton flannel shirt by cK Underwear; black and blue plaid cotton pajama pant by Nautica; wine tapestry crushed-velvet tank top and boxer shorts, both by GUESS? Underwear; red silk wrap three-quarter-length robe by Victoria's Secret; red cotton jersey sleeveless T-shirt by Champion; red cotton terry cloth hooded robe by FUBU; red Yankee hat by 5950; teddy bear by Best Friends; red and blue striped cotton robe by Tommy Hilfiger; fuchsia polyester slip dress by Victoria's Secret; black cotton robe with blue hood by Nautica; silver stretch polyester lace demi bra by Victoria's Secret; charcoal gray cotton poplin drawstring pajama pant by The GAP; white cotton jersey sleeveless T-shirt by Champion; black and blue cotton plaid pajama pant by Nautica; bucket hat by 555 SOUL; fuchsia and black nylon chemise, both by Joe Boxer. SEE THE DETAILS



super thugs

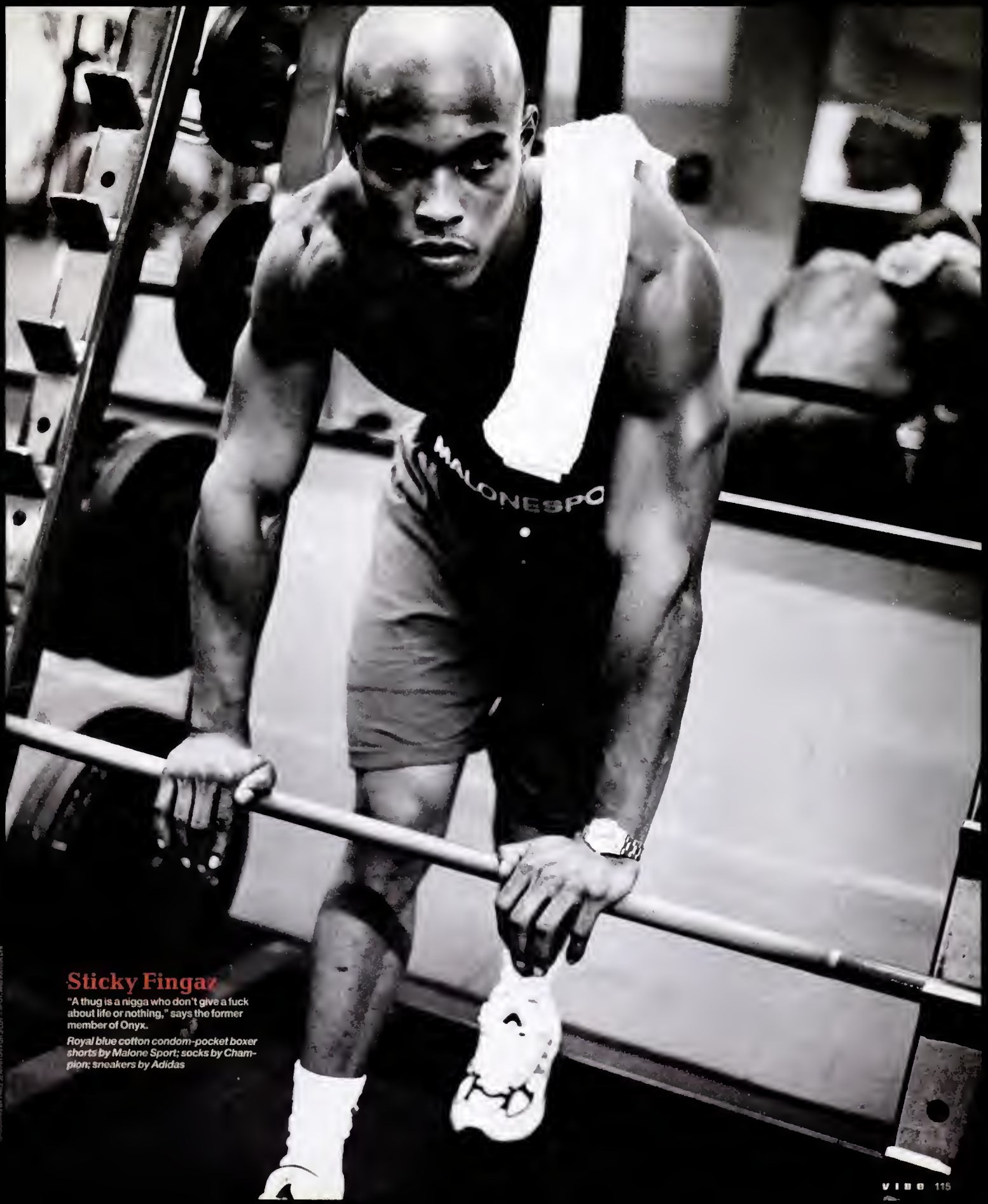
These MCs are working out in designer men's underwear– and still keepin' it real.

Photographs by Valerie Phillips.
Styling by Kadi Agüeros

Noreaga

"The word 'thug' ain't that deep," says the 21-year-old from Queens, "it's just a regular word now. In the 'hood, everybody ain't thugs."

Black and gray nylon jersey by Majestic; black and white cotton thermal loungewear shorts by FUBU; sneakers by Nike; hat by PNB Nation



Sticky Fingaz

"A thug is a nigga who don't give a fuck about life or nothing," says the former member of Onyx.

Royal blue cotton condom-pocket boxer shorts by Malone Sport; socks by Champion; sneakers by Adidas

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Ja Rule

What's a thug? "Ja," replies the 22-year-old MC, best known for his rugged verse on Jay-Z's "Can I Get A...?" from the soundtrack for the movie *Rush Hour* (Def Jam, 1998).

Blue plaid cotton campshirt and pajama shorts, both by Ralph Lauren Underwear; navy cotton stretch boxers by Tommy Hilfiger



Treach

Naughty by Nature's front man (shown here with his three-year-old godson, Deja), who describes himself as "old enough to live and too young to die," gives this definition for a thug: "a soldier down to put down for the clique and the cause without a second thought."

Red cotton boxer shorts and red silk boxer shorts, both by Naughty Gear. SEE THE DETAILS
All photographed at Johnny Lats Gym, N.Y.C. For more information, please call 212-366-4426.

yright



THE Stylist
DESIGNER FASHION

JOE BOXER

Some people like their underwear plain. Some people like theirs sexy. But Joe Boxer founder Nicholas Graham likes his tongue planted firmly in his cheek—even down to his drawers.

And that has been the successful idea behind the wild and whimsical men's boxer shorts, loungewear, and sleepwear, and women's innerwear and sleepwear (and a forthcoming line of home furnishings in fall '99) that make up the laughable world of Joe Boxer. Humor as well as techno colors seem to be working for the company, and *everybody's* seen Mr. Licky—the big yellow moon-faced smiling man with his tongue hanging out—at some specialty store or major department store nationwide. You may have seen him in other situations—but that's *your* bizness.

Joe Boxer is always coming up with fresh ways to bring its fishing-lure boxers, cocktail-printed boxers, cigar-printed boxers, and the like to the masses. Their latest invention is the Joe Boxer vending machine, which lets you buy "clean fresh underwear" on the go, just like buying a can of soda. You can find Joe Boxer machines on college campuses, in fitness centers, airports, and comedy clubs near you. Or just call 800-JOE-BOXER. This way, you can have the last laugh when you get undressed. SEE THE DETAILS.

Emil Wilbekin

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT FLEISCHHAUER; STYLING BY RINA KNIGHT; HAIR AND MAKEUP BY CHARLOTTE ASTEN/OPEN



UP, UP, AND AWAY: Seventeen-year-old Rockson Gracie (above) is a Blue Belt Jiu-Jitsu champion who won first place in the I COPA Pacifica de Jiu-Jitsu competition and the fourth Pan American Jiu-Jitsu Tournament last year. Jiu-Jitsu, the oldest form of martial arts, originated in India and developed in China and Japan. Gracie's family opened the first Gracie Jiu-Jitsu Academy in Brazil in 1925; now more than 40 members of his family (including his father) practice this art form.

gear
The Real Goods

sneak peak

Even though you're still lacing up winter boots, you need to start thinking about your sneakers for spring. You know—that mad dash to cop those new kicks before anyone else in your class, work place, neighborhood, or even city. As this footwear becomes more commonplace in the regular world—everybody isn't taking them off when they get into the office anymore—make sure yours shine the brightest. SEE THE DETAILS.

Mimi Valdés



Speed Racer by Reebok, $69.99

DRAVA by Fila, $69.95



Air Max 120 by Nike, $110

Watershoe by Adidas, $64.99



Air Zoom Seismic by Nike, $115

All-Terrain by New Balance, $58.50

scoop
food for fierce fashionistas

If you're tired of being stuck inside all winter and are ready to start venturing into the great outdoors, you may be interested in some of your favorite designers' rough-and-tumble gear for spring. **Tommy Hilfiger** starts spinning this trend with his new bright yellow Hilfiger Athletics/Cannondale mountain bikes. Hilfiger's M400 mountain bike is for beginners and the F600 is for advanced cyclists. Call 1-800-BIKE-USA for a dealer near you.... Next, there's the **Nautica Sports Tech** line, brought to you by **David Chu**. This new secondary line will include T-shirts, wind pants, tear-away pants, and sneakers similar to Nautica's Competition line, but will be more affordable and widely available at outlets like Champs and Foot Locker.... **The North Face**, maker of high-tech performance gear, is expanding its terrain by creating footwear that will help you take it higher—faster. And if that's not enough, check out The North Face's new backpack, which doubles as a laptop carrying case.... **Timberland**, another great outdoor-clothing company, is launching a new line of eyewear. Now you can have fresh frames to match your spanking new Timbs.... **Oakley**, makers of those high-tech skate and ski glasses and goggles, is launching a line of performance footwear for those on the go.... Now, something for the ladies who love wearing their men's clothes. In stores this spring you will be able to find women's gear by your favorite urban designers like **FUBU**, **Enyce**, and **Mecca USA**. Psst...we also hear on the low that **Maurice Malone** in working on his own women's collection too.

Emil Wilbekin

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENS MORTENSON

VIBE TRAVEL SPOT

VIBE came to Jamaica and made it feel alright!! Kicking off the Caribbean Tourism Conference, held September 24-26, 1998 in Ocho Rios Jamaica, VIBE threw an old-fashioned reggae jam. Here are some photos from the event.















1) The party goers reveled all night to hip hop and reggae DJs as well as a live band while sipping on Appleton Rum, sponsors of the event.

2) Among the attendees were (l-r): Marie Devele, Jamaican Tourism Board; Bob Hirsch, executive v.p., FCB; Robin Gibson, corporate accounts director, VIBE; singer Cliff Jones, who serenaded the crowd; and Noel Mignott, Jamaica Tourism Board.

3) Local musical group Toisis checking out their VIBE magazines!

4) Joining in the fun was former MTV personality and hip hop legend Fab 5 Freddy, surrounded here by (l-r) John Rollins, publisher, VIBE; Philmore Anderson, Atlantic Records; Cliff Jones, Robin Gibson and guests.

5) The VIBE staff personally thanked Richard Leue of Air Jamaica (far left) for their wonderful flight to the Caribbean Tourism Conference. Here, Richard shares a laugh with (l-r) Greg Truman, Air Jamaica; Robin Gibson; Toisis; Dave Rodney, Jamaica Tourism Board; and Fab 5 Freddy.

6) Enjoying their Appleton Rum are (back row, l-r): Big D, Irie FM; Anthony Swaby, Wray & Nephew; Garth Pinnock, Wray & Nephew; Valton Craigie, Wray & Nephew; Robin Gibson; Dave Rodney; Susan Manfood, In-Motion Dance Company; and (front row) Neil Borrowes, Wray & Nephew.

7) Another highlight of the evening was a performance by singer Sean Paul.

All photos courtesy of Trudy Morrison.

VIBE TRAVEL SPOT

From the looks of these pictures, it's undeniable that everyone had a great time at the Caribbean Tourism Conference '98 that VIBE helped make happen. With the livest music, the hottest performers, and an overall positive energy, we gave CTC attendees a taste of how we throw a party VIBE style. We also came down to celebrate the announcement of the VIBE CARIBBEAN GETAWAY advertising section, which, in our April '99 issue, will put VIBE's 3.7 million readers on to the hottest destinations in the Caribbean next summer. Call your VIBE sales representative to find out how you can be down with the VIBE CARIBBEAN GETAWAY section.

Arresting Beauty



Subject: Michael Michele, twentysomething actress.

Work: Currently she plays a detective on the NBC drama *Homicide: Life on the Street*. Michele's big break came when she played Wesley Snipes's girlfriend in *New Jack City* (Warner Bros., 1991). She also appeared as Malik Yoba's lawyer girlfriend on *New York Undercover*, and then played a savvy journalist in the film *The Sixth Man* (Touchstone, 1997).

Most Stylish Character: "A cop. There's something attractive about playing a strong woman in a male-dominated field."

Routine: This Indiana native cleanses her picture-perfect skin with AHAVA Milk Cleanser, then follows it up with a mild toner, also by AHAVA. She also swears by *anything* by Kiehl's.

Secrets: "Enjoying life in N.Y.C., lots of sleep, and a good glass of red wine" are essentials for this diva.

Must-Have: Clarins Eye Gel for those 5 a.m. shoots.

Big Disaster: "I did a commercial for Clairol. I was supposed to be a brunette, but the color turned out eggplant purple. That was the worst!"

First Makeup Purchase: "I never wore makeup until I was 21. When I finally decided to try some, I bought Prescriptives Custom Blend Foundation, made especially to match my complexion."

Ideal Role: "This is it! To play an intelligent woman detective. It's exciting! I even get to carry a Glock and a badge; sometimes I forget the badge, but when I go out, I *never* forget the gun."

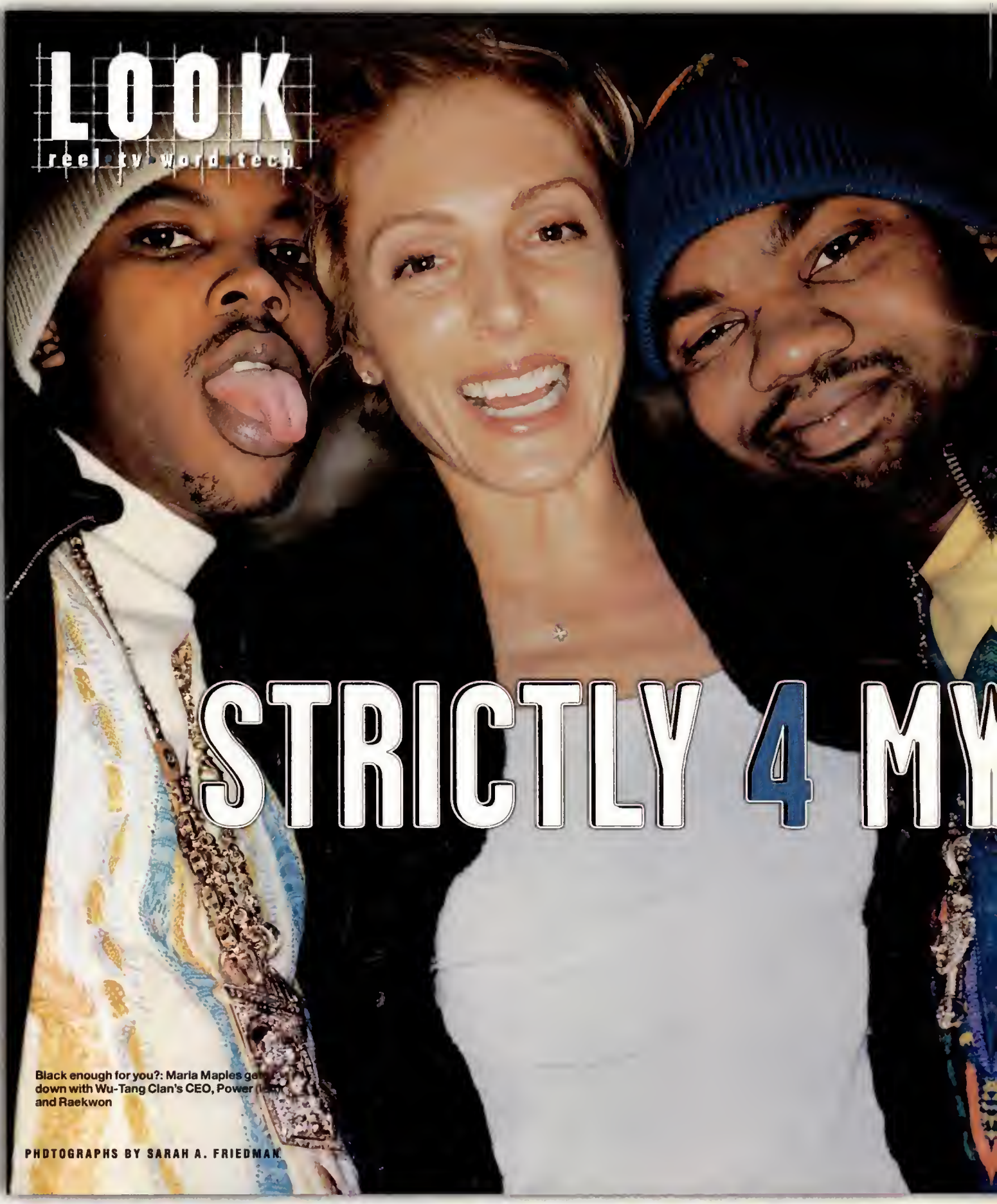
Favorite Star: "I've always looked to my parents for my inspiration. But if I had to say, it would be Pam Grier and Tamara Dobson [who played Cleopatra Jones]."

Transformers: Makeup by Greg Vaughan for L'Atelier N.Y.C.; hair by Xavier Soto for Marek & Assoc.

Face & Body: Ultra facial moisturizer by Kiehl's; extra-firming contour cream by Clarins; virtual skin concealer by Prescriptives; fresh glow cream foundation by BOBBI BROWN in Natural; loose powder by Clinique in 4plus; liquid eyeliner by The Body Shop in Taupe; color-rich eyeshadow by Black Opal in Chocolate Dreams; eyeshadow by FACE Stockholm in Pearl; blush by L'ORÉAL in Sable Golden Brown; mascara by Lancôme Définicils in Black; Lip Bomb moisturizer by Femme Arsenal in Pome-Grenade; lip liner in by IMAN in Espresso; shine shimmer in Glow by Clinique in Gold; glossing hair spray by Wella Liquid Hair; fragrance BY by Dolce & Gabbana; navy blue silk asymmetrical nightgown by La Perla. SEE THE DETAILS

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNALDO ANYAYA-LUCCA. STYLING BY EMIL WILSON


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EMERGENCY HAIR TREATMENT
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911 Heat Protector
911 Styling Spritz
Outsmart the enemies of beautiful hair with 911 products. They have the power to undo the damage caused by coloring, relaxing ... even vicious heat-styling appliances! Armed with 911, you can strengthen and repair your hair every time you shampoo, condition or style.
911 TO THE RESCUE
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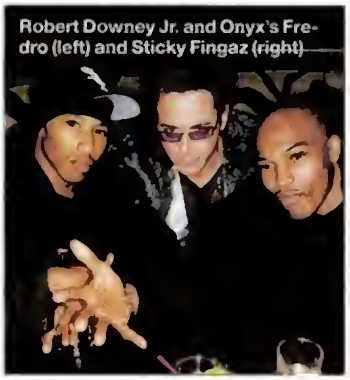


STRICTLY 4 MY

Black enough for you?: Maria Maples get[s] down with Wu-Tang Clan's CEO, Power [illegible] and Raekwon

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARAH A. FRIEDMAN

WIGGAZ


Robert Downey Jr. and Onyx's Fredro (left) and Sticky Fingaz (right)


Brooke Shields and Wu Posse


White Boys star Danny Hoch with Fat Joe (left) and Bonz Malone

The real deal behind Hollywood's love affair with rappers. *by Stephan Talty*

On the Manhattan set of James Toback's murder drama *Black and White*, the princes of the rap world–Raekwon, Method Man, Fredro Starr, and Nas among them–are laughing and slapping hands with young actors like Brooke Shields, Ben Stiller, and Robert Downey Jr. Director Toback calls "Action!," and Wu Wear's CEO, Power, strides through the cavernous Lot 61 hot spot where a glamorous "party" is in progress. The room is filled with gangsters, rich kids, models, even Marla Maples–but all eyes are on Power.

A few years ago, an associate of an underground rap group would have been lucky just to have gotten through security on this set. But recently, Hollywood has had a change of heart. From James Mangold (*Cop Land*, Miramax, 1997) to David O. Russell (*Three Kings*, Warner Bros., 1999), white movie directors and producers are putting on the rawest of rappers. "That's the new shit right now–movies," says Meth. "Now we're becoming part of the movies, making the movies, paying for the movies."

Black and White, the story of a bunch of rich white kids fascinated with hip hop, features Method Man and Ghostface Killah, and is part of a new wave of "wigger cinema"–two similarly themed films, *White Boys* and *The Breaks*, are currently in the works. "Rap *is* mainstream youth culture and global youth culture," says Marc Levin, director of *White Boys* and last year's Sundance Grand Jury winner, *Slam* (Trimark, 1998). "I mean, this film is being cofinanced by the French, who are hugely interested in hip hop." In fact, filmmakers have become so hot for rappers that this year alone Snoop, Fat Joe, Coolio, Big Pun, Dr. Dre, Q-Tip, Lil' Kim, Doug E. Fresh, Mic Geronimo, and Slick Rick are among the scores of novice actors who will be making appearances at neighborhood theaters.

Ironically, *White Boys* is shooting in Malcolm X's favorite Harlem hangout, the Lenox Lounge, where white socialites once came to hear Billie Holiday and dig the jazz scene. Some say that the current rappers-in-movies trend is part of this same voyeuristic tradition. *Black and White* director Toback (*Two Girls and a Guy*, 20th Century Fox, 1997) argues that whites have been intrigued with black culture "since slavery." From early jazz to Motown's heyday, black culture has mesmerized white kids looking for a rebellious thrill, but now, says Toback, that infatuation has grown into something deeper. "It's a whole sense of identity that is being formed by these kids," he says. "And once you get that radical in your interests, you want [hip hop artists] in all forms of cultural expression, including movies–because they are where you look to find who *you* are."

It is, in some ways, a bizarre concept: white filmmakers exploring black culture through white kids' obsession with it. "We want to do for African-American guys from the projects what Woody Allen has done for Manhattan Jews," says Ron Rotholz, a producer of *Black and White*. The difference, of course, is that Woody Allen *is* an Upper West Side Jew. Often the creative team behind these rap-obsessed films are middle-aged white guys acting out their fascination with black culture. "I used to escape white suburbia to hang out in black Boston clubs," says *White Boys* producer Richard Stratton. "I probably wanted to be black myself. I don't think this is all that new, but I think it's more spread out because the mass culture is so pandemic."

While *Black and White* addresses the issue of cultural appropriation head-on, *White Boys* takes an even more provocative approach. Its hero is a white Iowa boy who believes the color of his skin "is just an error." This corn-fed hip hop poet wants to be a rapper and imagines that his heroes' lives are one long video montage of Moët drinking, hoochie banging, and gun waving. The film parodies the fantasies of the white kid who thinks he's ghetto, while at the same time defending the committed wigger as a kind of social revolutionary. "It's really about white kids reaching out to a culture of resistance," says award-winning performance artist and *White Boys* star and cowriter Danny Hoch.

Of course, Hollywood has been very, very good to a couple of rappers already. Crossover king Will Smith's last four flicks grossed more than $1.5 billion worldwide. And Queen Latifah, who is now working on her 11th film, Universal's *The Bone Collector*, with Denzel Washington, has teenagers recognizing her as an actress first and a rapper second. "It just opens up your audience," says Latifah. "If people are browsing through Record Warehouse, they might buy your CD just on the strength of seeing you in a movie."

Though many hip hop artists insist they venture into films for money and fame, for the most part, rappers aren't making big bucks in Hollywood. They're shooting small parts for modest pay in low-budget films. But these indie projects are being closely watched. After Hype Williams's dark and violent *Belly* (Artisan, 1998), starring Nas and DMX, opened to poor reviews and a dismal box office performance, big-budget producers started looking for new ways to bring hip hop's billion-dollar music revenues to the big screen. "Hollywood is always four long, slow steps behind films like ours," says Toback. "That's their business–finding out what other people are doing and imitating it."

Hip hop has clearly completed act 1 of its Hollywood story: Rappers have infiltrated the film world, but mostly as hired guns in other people's "street" fantasies. And it's not just white folks capitalizing on rappers' hardcore image. Even hip hop artists who've managed to get behind the camera are dealing the same gangsta dreams. Ice Cube and Master P–who wrote, produced, and directed their own films–have stuck close to the formula of booty jokes and gun violence in flicks like *The Players Club* (New Line, 1998) and *I'm Bout It* (No Limit Films, 1997). "Most rappers have already shown in their music what they're after," says film critic Armond White, "and changing the world isn't it."

Curtains may now be rising on act 2, as hip hop artists face the challenge of moving beyond the gangsta roles they're so readily offered. With the right opportunities, rappers could impact American films the same way they transformed music. "We need to take this seriously," says Q-Tip. "We should go up for the same roles as Tom Cruise or Matt Damon, and get them. It's up to us to get those jobs because Hollywood could be a real liberation thing."

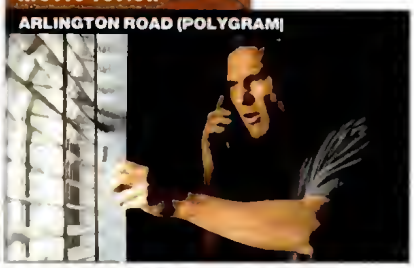
Often the creative team behind these rap-obsessed films are middle-aged white guys acting out their fascination with black culture.

screen

gary dauphin's flick picks

movie review

ARLINGTON ROAD (POLYGRAM)



Jacked up on American fears of homegrown terrorism, *Arlington Road* is an effective but over-the-top thriller—scary and ridiculous at the same time. Jeff Bridges plays a college professor who studies domestic terrorists, militias, and mad bombers from a safe distance until an odd new couple moves onto his street. Creepily perfect, Tim Robbins's and Joan Cusack's characters seem like old-fashioned heartland neighbors, but Bridges soon spots cracks in their Ozzie and Harriet facade, from fake names to mysterious blueprints in their den. Ultimately, *Arlington Road* has little to say about the reality of right-wing terrorism in America—Bridges goes from amateur detective to action hero in the blink of an eye and the trick ending makes no sense—but as a dark Hollywood thrill ride, it packs an unexpectedly explosive punch.

movie previews

THE FACULTY (DIMENSION)



Hotshot indie director Robert Rodriguez (*From Dusk Till Dawn*) and superhot screenwriter Kevin Williamson (*Scream*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*) team up in this sci-fi horror outing starring Elijah Wood, Usher, and Salma Hayek. Described as "*The Breakfast Club* meets *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*," *The Faculty* tells the gory, F/X-filled tale of a small town where all the adults are replaced by alien "teachers" looking to tutor the human race into submission.

VIRUS (UNIVERSAL)



Based on a Dark Horse comic book, this big-budget bug-hunt thriller hopes to cash in with moviegoers tired of holiday family fare. Starring Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland, and William Baldwin, *Virus* chases an alien microbe that infects the crew of a stranded Russian research ship then grows into a cybernetic monster. (Think: the Borg invade the *Titanic*.) Its trailer tag is, "It Is Aware," but unless first-time director John Bruno delivers the gruesome goods the line might become, "Nobody cares."

dr. snakeskin's home video views

Peep show: pimps, hoes, and player's balls



Pimps *must* get paid—or at least look like they do, according to Brent Owens's gleefully trashy, shot-on-video *Pimps Up, Ho's Down* (Out of Pocket Productions). An expanded version of last summer's HBO shockumentary, *Pimps*—the 30-minutes-longer director's cut—is now available on home video. Yes, folks, you can now rewind the butt-flappin' stripper scenes.

Mirroring blaxploitation flicks *Willie Dynamite* (1974), *The Mack* (1973), and *Superfly* (1972), *Pimps* celebrates The Life and all the accoutrements that make hustling appeal to impressionable young men—flashy rides, flashy clothes, flashy women, and, of course, flashy cash. Revolving around two player's balls (award banquets where players praise their own), the film introduces us to pimp turned preacher Bishop Don "Magic" Juan, lady mack Big Lex, Pimpin' Ken, and Mr. Whitefolks, the pimp MC/ball host Ice-T wishes he was.

A general crowd pleaser, Whitefolks shines as one smart, out-the-box white boy pushin' for a "Million Mack March." But I bet my dollar on the fine-ass Big Lex. Elected "Female Mack of the Year," she knows how to treat a lady, effortlessly getting prize streetwalker Alize to drop Pimpin' Ken's harem for hers. What makes these unsavory working stiffs so appealing is their charisma: the earnest way Whitefolks tells his I-always-wanted-to-be-a-pimp stories, the impromptu barbershop sermon Bishop gives. But the very balls that shape *Pimps* also weigh it down. You just know everybody's snortin' that cocaine and talkin' shit. And for a documentary, that's too much celebration and too little critique.

REEL TO REAL

News from the Hollyweird

by Stephen Rebello



The Rockman

Hey, if Adam Sandler can bat it out of the box office park with the likes of *The Wedding Singer* (New Line) and *The Waterboy* (Buena Vista), no wonder everybody in Tinseltown wants to climb into bed with comic fireball Chris Rock. Since flat-out pocketing *Lethal Weapon 4* (Warner Bros.), the Rockman has sifted through a slew of movie offers to play for Warner Bros. *The Spin Doctor*, from a script by *There's Something About Mary* cowriters Ed Decter and John Strauss, is tentatively scheduled to begin shooting this spring. Rock will play a motormouthed PR guy hired by the New York Knicks to rehab the image of their badass star forward. At press time, the hoopster role had yet to be cast...maybe Sandler's available?

With 34 million viewers tuning in for November 1997's *Cinderella*, Brandy scored such a ratings knockout for ABC that the network has asked her to do it again, this time with Diana Ross. Scheduled for a May air date, *Double Platinum* tells the story of an ambitious singer (*Miss* Ross) who reunites with her now grown musician daughter. They yell, they cry, they sing, they compete, they hug, they wear cool clothes. Filming began in December in New York.

Slated for spring release is the urban adventure comedy *3 Strikes* (Absolute Entertainment), in which a young brotha, played by Brian Hooks (*Beloved*), accidentally gets implicated in a crime that could get him 25 to life. With D.J. Pooh (cowriter/actor in *Friday* and producer of multiplatinum grooves for Snoop and L.L. Cool J) making his feature directing debut, expect, if nothing else, a soundtrack filled with killer Cali cuts.

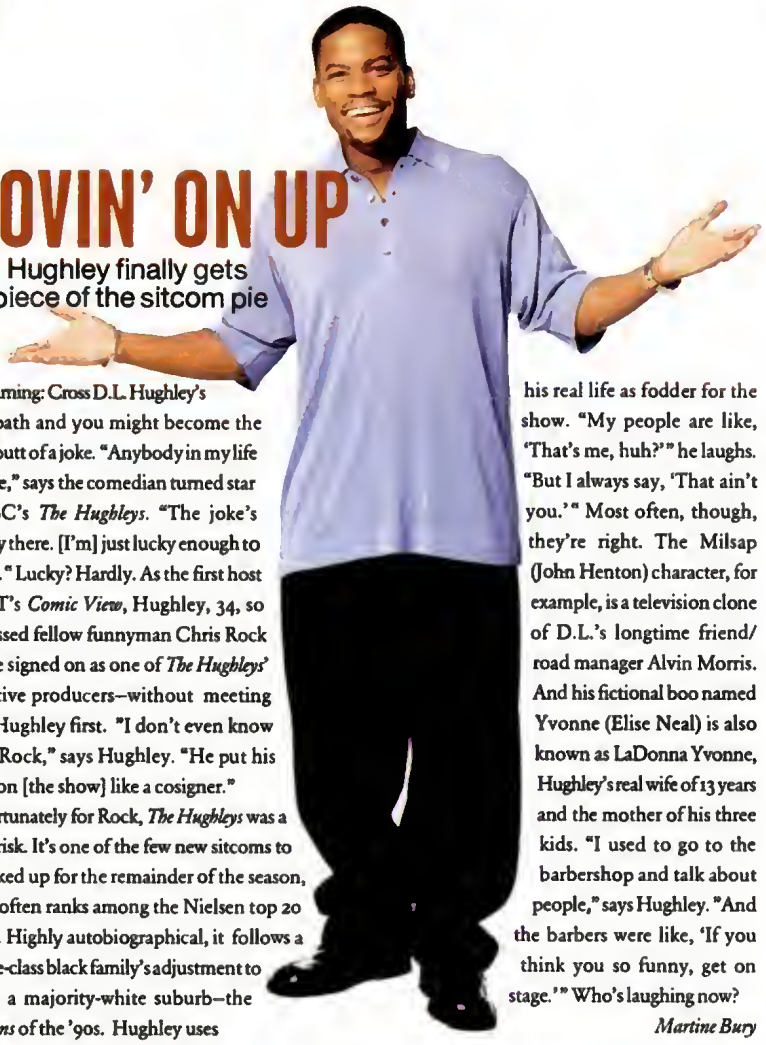
Insiders are gabbing about how Hollywood's taking its sweet time making Veronica Webb's *Ghetto Fabulous*. Months ago, Fox 2000 reportedly ponied up six figures for the movie, written by Webb, about three women trying to hit the big time in the dog-eat-dog world of R&B. A top executive at the studio says, "To tell you the truth, I've hardly even heard of the project."

Glad to see there's no bad blood between Oprah Winfrey and Disney after her highly touted *Beloved* tanked at the box office. Winfrey, along with James Earl Jones and Penn & Teller, are slated to introduce segments of Disney's long-in-the-works animated epic *Fantasia 2000*.


EXP

MOVIN' ON UP

D.L. Hughley finally gets his piece of the sitcom pie



Warning: Cross D.L. Hughley's path and you might become the butt of a joke. "Anybody in my life is game," says the comedian turned star of ABC's *The Hughleys*. "The joke's already there. [I'm] just lucky enough to notice." Lucky? Hardly. As the first host of BET's *Comic View*, Hughley, 34, so impressed fellow funnyman Chris Rock that he signed on as one of *The Hughleys*' executive producers—without meeting with Hughley first. "I don't even know Chris Rock," says Hughley. "He put his name on [the show] like a cosigner."

Fortunately for Rock, *The Hughleys* was a smart risk. It's one of the few new sitcoms to be picked up for the remainder of the season, and it often ranks among the Nielsen top 20 shows. Highly autobiographical, it follows a middle-class black family's adjustment to life in a majority-white suburb—the *Jeffersons* of the '90s. Hughley uses his real life as fodder for the show. "My people are like, 'That's me, huh?'" he laughs. "But I always say, 'That ain't you.'" Most often, though, they're right. The Milsap (John Henton) character, for example, is a television clone of D.L.'s longtime friend/road manager Alvin Morris. And his fictional boo named Yvonne (Elise Neal) is also known as LaDonna Yvonne, Hughley's real wife of 13 years and the mother of his three kids. "I used to go to the barbershop and talk about people," says Hughley. "And the barbers were like, 'If you think you so funny, get on stage.'" Who's laughing now?

Martine Bury

COUCH CONCERTS

Shows where you've got the best seat in the house



CeCe and Kirk: Can I get a witness?

MOTOWN LIVE
(Weekend nights, check local listings)
Old school meets new in these weekly jam sessions. One example: Kirk Franklin and CeCe Winans performing R. Kelly's "I Believe I Can Fly."

A&E'S LIVE BY REQUEST
(Dates vary, check *www.livebyrequest.com*)
Viewers call in song requests and artists play to stay during these live groove sessions. A recent performer: Gloria Estefan.

SESSIONS AT WEST 54TH
(Weekly, check local listings)
PBS spotlights artists who exist outside MTV's realm. January's guests include Chocolate Genius and the Afro-Cuban All Stars.

ONEWORLD MUSIC BEAT
(Weekend nights, check local listings)
Russell Simmons' magazine hits your TV with guests like Snoop and Keith Sweat.

VH1'S HARD ROCK LIVE
(Fridays, 7 p.m. EST)
Foot-tapping favorites, from alternative to R&B. On Jan. 9, swing with the Brian Setzer Orchestra and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy. *R.T.*

REMOTE PATROL

When it comes to prime-time programming, you've got the power



Cmr McBride's *Pfeiffer* is history

Ever wonder who's the most powerful person in television? Well, here's a clue: It's not a network exec or a talk show host who's the producer and star of a major motion picture. It's you. Yeah, you—Mr. or Ms. Couch Potato—have the power to control what stays on the air—or doesn't.

Case in point: UPN's ill-conceived *The Secret Diary of Desmond Pfeiffer*. Despite the network's insistence that it would "never let any special interest groups dictate our business policy," the vapid sitcom about a black butler in Abraham Lincoln's White House ultimately succumbed to viewer pressure. Nielsen box holders did what advertisers fear most—they tuned out. In its first week, the show received a dismal 1.6 (out of 100) Nielsen rating, meaning that 98.4 percent of the TV viewing population said no to *Pfeiffer*. "The best way people can affect television shows is if nobody watches," says advertising executive Dan Renk of Optimum Media/DDB Needham Worldwide. "Turn it off."

UPN, however, is not alone in underestimating the might of the viewer. In the 1997–98 season, Fox grudgingly reinstated *Living Single* (albeit temporarily) after fans flooded its offices with demands for the show's return. ABC canned its critically acclaimed drama *Nothing Sacred* after religious groups threatened to boycott Walt Disney (Disney is ABC's parent company) and the show's advertisers. Even NBC powerhouse *Seinfeld* felt the wrath of an outraged Puerto Rican community when Kramer accidentally set a Puerto Rican flag on fire in one of the sitcom's final episodes. Amid a sea of protests, the episode was yanked from all future airings in syndication. "Ultimately the public decides what's on television and what's not," says Rank. "If nobody's watching it, the show will go off." *Monique N. Matthews*

ROCK THE REMOTE

Tired of wack programs? Let the network heads know what you think. Here's some contact information to get you started.

Jamie Tarses (Ms.!)
Entertainment President, ABC
77 West 66th Street
New York, N.Y. 10023
212-456-7477

Leslie Moonves (Mr.!)
President, CBS
51 West 52nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10019
212-975-3247

Doug Herzog
Entertainment President, FOX
P.O. Box 900
Beverly Hills, Calif. 90213
310-369-3066

Scott Sassa
Entertainment President, NBC
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10112
212-664-2333

Dean Valentine
President, UPN
11800 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, Calif. 90025
310-575-7123

Garth Ancier
Entertainment President, WB
4000 Warner Boulevard, Bldg. 34R,
Burbank, Calif. 91522
818-977-5000

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE LANGE, BEAN MURPHY, BILL REITZEL

HOT PROP: THE MAGIC 8 BALL First *Frasier*'s Kelsey Grammer credited the $6 toy with predicting his fifth Emmy win. Then the four-inch sphere rolled through *Dawson's Creek*, where Pacey got one as a birthday gift. Next stop: *Friends*. Ross asked an 8 Ball for marital advice. Did he *really* think he could drop Rachel for his new wife, Emily? OUTCOME UNLIKELY. *Rochell Thomas*

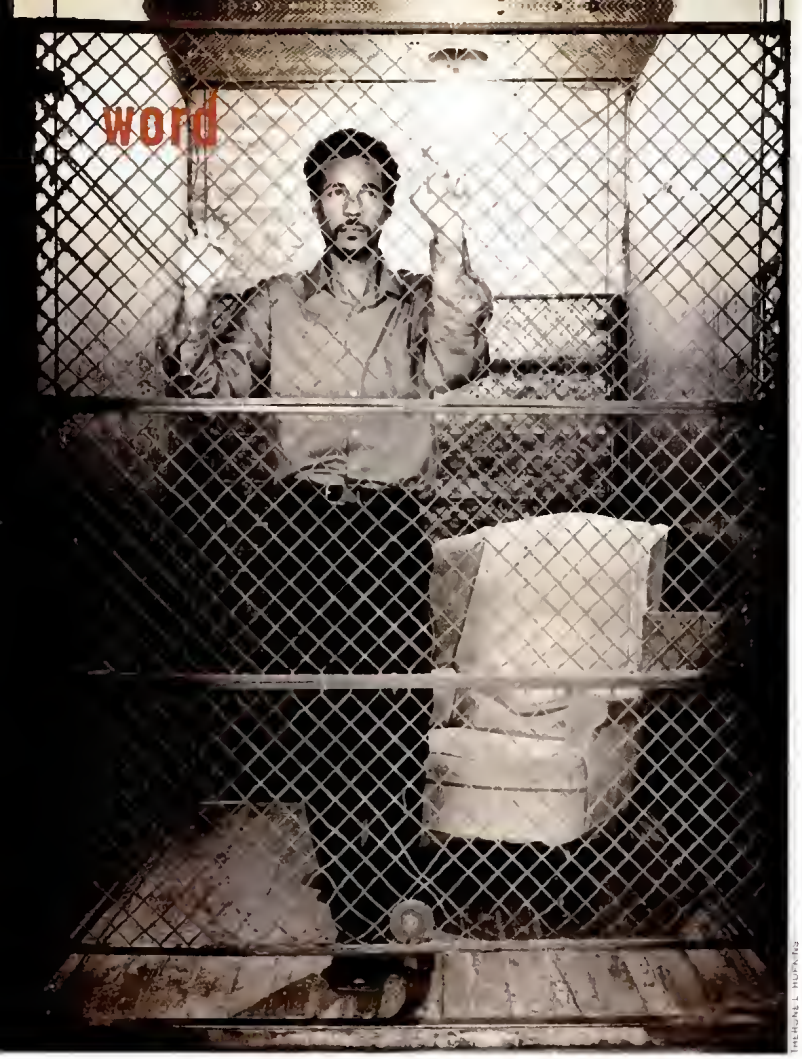


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TENSION TKO



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Upper management kicking your ass? Before you take on the office bully, hone your body into a lean, mean fighting machine with professional-quality training equipment from Balazs, Inc. The extremely sturdy, double-base Universal Boxing Stand (UBS) can be configured to support up to two heavy bags, like the 80-pound Nevatear bag shown here. You can also add a Double-End Striking Bag and a Jet Speed Bag to build up those lightning-fast fists of fury. Balazs (888-466-6765, or Balazs@TakeItToTheBag.com) carries a comprehensive array of boxing gear, from bags to padded gloves to workout clothes and more. They even have a special picture frame called the Mugshot ($17.50), which lets you post a picture of your least favorite person on your punching bag. Now *that's* focused aggression. *Mark Brooks*

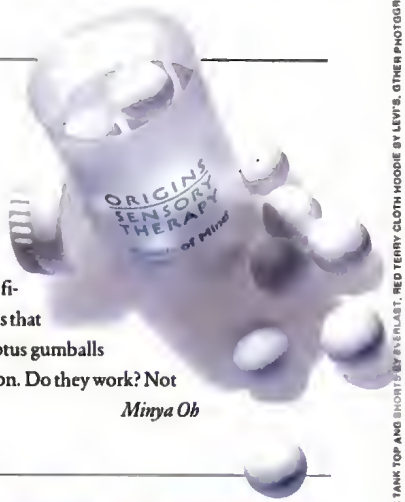


SLAM MAN

BY FITNESS QUEST, $299

Slam Man thinks you're a punk. This personal boxing trainer/victim from Fitness Quest dares you to let off steam (and build strength and speed) by bashing the blinking lights on his head and torso. Slam Man stands five feet tall and flashes 15 preprogrammed boxing combinations.

If you survive the unit's cumbersome assemblage (which requires 240 pounds of sand!), you'll find that pounding on Slam Man (gloves included) could be one of the best ways to hand out a beatdown without getting locked down. Plus, we heard Slam Man was even talking about yo' mama! *M.B.*



PEACE OF MIND GUMBALLS

ORIGINS, $3.50

So you're more like Gandhi than (Arturo) Gatti? Well nonviolent pacificists get stressed out too. Origins claims that one chomp on their basil and eucalyptus gumballs will relax your nerves and relieve tension. Do they work? Not really, but they sure taste great. *Minya Oh*



CONTENDER

SONY ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA, $40

KNOCKOUT KINGS

EA SPORTS, $39.95

Two new titles for Sony PlayStation pugilists invite you to step in the (virtual) ring to get your (literal) ass beat. First, EA's *Knockout Kings* is the only boxing title that lets you go toe-to-toe with fight legends from Joe Louis to Evander Holyfield. Only the sometimes-sluggish controls mar this otherwise excellent arcade game.

Sony's *Contender* features cartoonish graphics and a first-person feature that lets you see that right hook as it connects with your face. But overall, *Knockout Kings* scores an easy KO over *Contender* for the most stress-bashing bang for your buck. *M.B.*



HOLLA AT ME! Keepin' up with keepin' in touch

The Beep Box pager, Swatch, $100 (with 1,000 beeps of service). Swatch's first beeper has all the features of a regular pager (time/date, vibrate/beep, alarm, etc.) at the touch of *one* button. How'd dey do dat? Well, this "cute as a..." button clicks *and* rotates. With vibrant color combos and a touch-me circular shape, this beeper's got a sense of humor.

V3620 cellular phone, Motorola, $700. In the ongoing battle of the cell phones, Motorola's new pint-size hom packs a punch. Yours may do everything but your laundry, but this one will stop traffic. Smaller and lighter than your beeper, but complete with answering machine/voice recorder, vibrating ring, and phonebook, this analog phone is the final frontier of cellular miniaturization. (We hope.) *M.O.*



AMIL PHOTOGRAPHED BY JAYSON KEELING. STYLIST: CHARLENE GIXON. HAIR AND MAKEUP: MELANIE HARRIS AT THE IMAGE GROUP. BLACK TANK TOP AND SHORTS BY EVERLAST. RED TERRY CLOTH HOODIE BY LEVI'S. OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENS MORTENSEN

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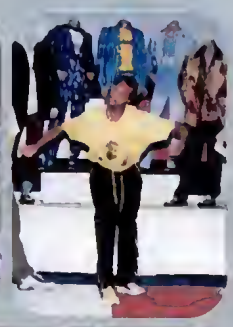
The first fashion and music trade show—VIBESTYLE—debuted at New York City's Jacob Javits Convention Center, October 18–20, 1998. The VIBESTYLE trade show featured aisles of fashion designers showcasing their gear to trend-hungry retail buyers from around the world, set to the beat of today's most popular and cutting-edge music. Here are photos from VIBESTYLE and other recent VIBE events.

























1. The VIBESTYLE fashion show took the attendees on a simulated New York City subway train ride through the world of trendsetting fashion set to the sounds of the street culture that inspires it. Treach of Naughty by Nature and shortie strutted their stuff and new looks from Naughty Gear.

2. Monifah dared onlookers to touch it—her Tommy Hilfiger ensemble, of course!

3. Miss Jones, styled in Mecca, wore it well.

4. Anchoring the VIBESTYLE trade show was the exhibition area, Tommy's VIBE, sponsored by Tommy Hilfiger, featuring national snowboarding champions Trace Worthington and Kris Fedderson performing air stunts—sans snow, of course!

5. Where's Bruk Up? The Reggae contortionist and Tommy Hilfiger model broke it down during his performance at Tommy's VIBE.

6. H.O.L.A. Recordings' Voice of Theory and actor Malik Yoba (center), sporting Maurice Malone and NY Lugz, respectively, hung out backstage at the VIBESTYLE fashion show.

7. Among the many celebrities in the house at VIBESTYLE were former Def Jam recording artists Onyx, who stopped by the Mountain Gear booth to greet fans and sign a few autographs.

8. Vinnie Brown of Naughty by Nature (center) convinced VIBESTYLE attendees that Naughty Gear was going to blow up larger than the speakers at his booth in 1999.

9. Brue McHayle, CEO of PNB Nation, takes in the activities at VIBESTYLE with his director of marketing (and sister), Shara McHayle-Grinage, before heading off to the official after-party featuring Penalty Recordings artist Noreaga.

10. When Noreaga (left) got together with Kurupt to perform at the VIBESTYLE after-party, they lit up the stage.

11. After tearing the house down at the kickoff party for the first-ever VIBESTYLE trade show, Noreaga partied with (from left) Matt Pressman, corporate accounts manager, VIBE and VIBESTYLE sales director; Ahna Biddle, assistant events manager, VIBE; and Columbia Records artist Nas.

12. Handling the turntables and the mike was the biggest dawg of them all, Funkmaster Flex, with DJ Kaori at the VIBESTYLE after-party.

Photo credits: Courtesy of NSI (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9); courtesy of Susan Blond, Inc. (6); Maurice McFadden (10, 11, 12)

REVOLUTIONS



BUSTA RHYMES
'E.L.E. (THE FINAL WORLD FRONT)'
EASTWEST/ELEKTRA

BY ELLIOTT WILSON

Survivalist. Forget his flamboyant, larger-than-life image, survivor is the word that best describes Busta Rhymes. Trevor "Busta" Smith and classmates Dinco D, Charlie Brown, and Cut Monitor Milo stomped into the '90s as the Leaders of the New School. On Leaders' wildly innovative debut, *Future Without a Past* (Elektra, 1991), charismatic Busta showcased the gruff, grimy vocal delivery that inspired plenty of his contemporaries. But while Busta-esque acts like Onyx quickly attained platinum status, Leaders disbanded in the wake of their misunderstood second disc, *The Inner Mind's Eye: T.I.M.E.* (Elektra, 1993).

With full control of his artistic devices and inspired by the acclaim he

garnered for his explosive lyrics on A Tribe Called Quest's 1991 MC crusher "Scenario" (Jive), Busta landed feetfirst into the cameo king slot. From 1992 on (and mostly by way of studio-session busting) the Brooklyn-bred dread set the foundation for a solo career. Whether by copping his own interlude time on Mary J. Blige's 1992 debut, *What's the 411?* (Uptown/MCA), or by scene stealing on his contribution to Craig Mack's all-star "Flava in Ya Ear" remix (Bad Boy, 1994), Busta got heard.

Declaring on the intro of his 1996 debut, *The Coming* (Elektra), that there were only four years left till Armageddon, Busta attacked the rap world like a filet mignon-deprived pit bull. But while *Coming*'s rumbling anthem "Woo-Hah! Got You All in Check" provided a circus orchestra's thump that invited all thrill seekers to the party, mainstream drones wouldn't attend the jamboree until the arrival of 1997's *When Disaster Strikes* (Asylum/Elektra). Calculatingly catchy and clever, "Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Could See," and its formidable follow-up, "Dangerous," were *Disaster*'s two breakthrough mega-singles—*and* they were backed by Technicolor video clips. MTV execs took notice. On TV sets, cassette decks, portable disc players...Busta Rhymes was like McDonald's—he was everywhere.

And just because he's fresh off of conceptualizing, performing on, hosting, and executive-producing two successful full-lengths within one year (*Disaster*, platinum, and last year's gold *The Imperial Album*, the official Flipmode Squad mouthpiece), that doesn't mean the combustible Busta is losing steam. With *E.L.E.*, his third sonic boomer, Busta lunges forward on a *Deep Impact*–inspired mission, looking to spread the truth about the approaching millennium. Busta's latest, even more so than his previous efforts, relies on the promise that Earth will soon shatter to bloody bits.

Still, from the album's riveting first song, "Everybody Rise," and its impassioned assertion to "Get what's yours from out this fucker / Before your time run out," Busta sounds like he's having a grand ol' time in these last days. Possessing the formula to make dance floors shake nationwide, he glides through this album delivering short musical strikes (most tunes clock in at three minutes and change). Relying on off-center musical textures, the body-moving "Tear da Roof Off" and the tantalizing "Do It to Death" both feature assertions that sound way better than they look on paper. Check the lyrical gymnastics of the latter: "My nigga Horace / Stick up for a nigga like Chuck Norris / Got some other niggas lost way up in a forest / Hang you up in a harness / Label me and all of my niggas the hardest / Fuck around be the next formally known as artist." Blaowww!!!

E.L.E. does lose some steam, however, when its doomsday premise is abandoned for songs that rely more on Busta's style than his substance. "Keepin' It Tight," fueled by a sample from '70s African funkmaster Manu Dibango, and the first single, "Gimme Some More"—with its *Psycho*-like bass line—are both more about their eclectic grooves than his vocal wild style. And "Just Give It to Me Raw," a tale of a scandalous, hard-to-resist harlot, owns a narrative that's difficult to follow. The more accessible "Do the Bus a Bus" resurrects Jimmy Spicer's die-hard '80s anthem, "The Bubble Bunch," and is clearly Busta's best shot at attacking the charts, as his more high-profile collaborations aren't all that they should be. For real.

Instead of overindulging in hip hop's current rapper-of-the-moment guest-spot trend, Rhymes reaches out to heavyweights from other musical genres. Although Janet Jackson seductively croons along on "What's It Gonna Be" about how she'll "make you have wet dreams," the song fails to bust anything off—her lusty blowing clashes with Rhymes's self-absorbed ego strokings. Ozzy Osbourne guests on "This Means War" and provides Black Sabbath's 1971 classic, "Iron Man" (Warner Bros.) with a peculiar face-lift. Osbourne—with couching from Busta Bus—reworks his original lyrics but doesn't sound entirely comfortable alongside the rambunctious rapper.



DECLARING ON THE INTRO OF HIS 1996 DEBUT, *THE COMING*, THAT THERE WERE ONLY FOUR YEARS LEFT TILL ARMAGEDDON, BUSTA ATTACKED THE RAP WORLD LIKE A FILET MIGNON—DEPRIVED PIT BULL.

No doubt, Busta's at his best when he's rollin' for self—as witnessed on the melodic title track and the jingling "Take It Off"—or when paired with a rapper who can match his explosiveness. Look no further than No Limit soldier Mystikal who helps bring good things to life on the eruptive "Iz They Wildin Wit Us & Gettin' Rowdy Wit Us," where 16 bars of lyrical fury fly by faster than you can say *impeach the President* five times fast. Press rewind if they haven't blown your mind.

Not as long-lasting as the best moments from Busta's other works, *E.L.E.* is still Engaging, Lively, and Entertaining. And from his proclamation at the end of "Hot Shit Makin' Ya Bounce"—"I ain't done yet / Before I go to my permanent home / Make sure you put one of the illest on my tombstone"—Busta probably has yet another bomb to drop before the year two G. Nuclear fallout or not, real niggas like Busta never die. They survive.

REVOLUTIONS 2NOTLUOVAR

THIS IS AN A/B CONVERSATION

FLY TRACKS OR WACK WAX? ASK OUR RESIDENT CRITICS, A&B.

"Ghetto Children," JUVENILE *400 Degreez* (Cash Money/Universal)



COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL

A: I just love the beat. It's that southern, bouncy sound we've all heard a million times, but it's cool because it makes you wanna dance. **B:** I guess it's alright, but I want something *dirty*. And this sounds a *little too* pop for me. **A:** You think he's selling out? **B:** I'm not saying he's selling out. He's just trying to make that money. But it's definitely not as raw as "HA." And I'm disappointed 'cause I thought he was gonna stay raw, especially if he's talking about ghetto children! **A:** He's still raw. You just gotta *listen*.

"Ends," EVERLAST *Whitey Ford Sings the Blues* (Tommy Boy)



KEITH CARTER

B: It sounds like something that might have come out in 1969. **A:** True. Sounds like Wyclef meets Bob Dylan. **B:** Yo, I'm used to Everlast talking about, "Pack it up, pack it in, let me begin!" But this is just like what Vanilla Ice is doin' now. **A:** They really need to make up their minds and stick with... **B:** But House of Pain's audience pretty much died after "Jump Around." It's probably good that he went in a new direction. **A:** I guess so. I like this song. If I heard it on the radio, I'd listen. It has lots of layers and the little rap he just did was cool. **B:** This is a little tame for Everlast. If I heard this on the radio, I would turn. It's not grabbin' me. And he can't really sing.

"Jasmine," BLACK ROB *Street Stories* (Bad Boy/Arista)



JOHN RICARD

A: I like Black Rob. **B:** This beat is *so* hot. **A:** I love the steel pans. Other than that I don't really feel this song. **B:** But it's hot! See, he's in the club with his girl and she leaves him for another dude. **A:** Crazy! **B:** I think that's a guy's worst nightmare. **A:** [*Laughs*] **B:** I think he goes and kills both of them. **A:** *What?* **B:** I feel sorry for the other dude 'cause he didn't know anything. He was just chillin'. Black Rob is one of the best storytellers. He comes pretty close to Biggie in that respect.

"We Ride," R. KELLY, FEATURING CAM'RON, NOREAGA, JAY-Z, VEGAS CATS, R (Jive)



MELISSA TAYLOR

B: It seems like R. Kelly is too stuck on this money thing. **A:** He's cheap! Remember, he's the one who wants to go "*Half* on a Baby." **B:** [*Laughs*] Cam sounds cute and has good little punchlines. **A:** But I'm wondering why R. Kelly did this, though. I wish he would stick to love songs like "Seems Like You're Ready" or even "Down Low (Nobody Has to Know)." He has no love anymore. He just wants the money. **B:** Jay-Z has the best part. It would have been better if it were just the two of them.

"The Best of You (L-Boogie mix)," ANDREA MARTIN *The Best of Me* (Arista)



COURTESY OF ARISTA

B: This song is bangin'. Lauryn is a dope producer. What's this song about? **A:** She's saying that she may not have all of him, but she has the best of him. She's sharing her man, but she's cool with that. **B:** Oh! I thought she was a donor recipient. Like, I can't have them eyes, but this kidney is feelin' good! **A:** You're *crazy*. Her voice is so deep and soothing. **B:** But she sounds like somebody from around the way who can sing a little bit. You know? **A:** I think she can *blow*. **B:** Lauryn shoulda rhymed on this. That woulda been perfect.

"Sympathetic Character," ALANIS MORISSETTE *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie* (Maverick/Warner Bros.)



PATRICIA BECK

B: I could hear the RZA doing a track like this. **A:** This feels eerie. I guess it's the point since she's talking about an abusive relationship. **B:** She has a lot of soul in her. I think if she ever hooked up with the right R&B producer, she could have a huge black audience. Could you imagine, like, Timbaland or Jermaine Dupri remixing this? **A:** Or even Wyclef. **B:** Alanis should do a song with Erykah Badu. That would be sick! **A:** I can't imagine that. Lots of women all over the planet could relate to this song. The music is so scary. **B:** It should be in a movie, in an action sequence or something. **A:** She's an incredible songwriter.

"Just When I Think I'm Over You," DEBORAH COX *One Wish* (Arista)



COURTESY OF ARISTA

B: Another Spanish guitar. That's the thing right now. **A:** I don't like this! I hate it! **B:** Aww, she's tryin' to sound just like Toni Braxton! This sounds like a Rodney Jerkins track. **A:** It is. He has the same rim-shot thing goin' on in every song. And I don't think this flatters her voice at all. **B:** It's like he looked at what Toni and Babyface were doin' and tried to do the same thing. But it's not even half as good as the originators.

"What's So Different," GINUWINE *100% Ginuwine* (550 Music/Sony)



DAVID E

A: I always love Timbaland. **B:** He's the hottest producer right now. **A:** I don't like Ginuwine's voice. It's too thin, but the beat is so good that it doesn't matter. **B:** I don't have beef with Ginuwine, but I don't think he'd make it without Timbaland. Just like Snoop is cool, but without Dre the magic is lost. **A:** I agree. I can't even tell what he's saying yet. **B:** The girl wants to cheat on her man with Ginuwine, but Ginuwine doesn't want to. He said "If you cheated on him you'd do it to me" **A:** And then he'd have to kill them, right [*laughs*]?

REVOLUTIONS 2 EVOLUTIONS

OH, WORD?

BY MINYA OH

The early birds get the word on upcoming releases. (All information subject to change according to the artist's slightest whim.)

•Nas's first solo album in more than three years looks to be as highly potent as it is anticipated. Due out in early February, *I Am* (Columbia) includes (1) the **DJ Premier**–produced first single, "Nas Is Like," and, of course, (2) the mainstream **Trackmasters** cuts that are de rigueur for a platinum-selling artist of Nas's status. But for the hardcore Naserites, the album offers material like "Project Windows" (featuring **Ronald Isley** on the chorus) and "We Will Survive," an intensely personal and moving open letter to the **Notorious B.I.G.** and **Tupac Shakur**. "Dear Big," rhymes Nas, "These niggas is wrong / Using your name in vain / And they claim to be New York's king / It ain't about that / ...I missed your wake / Not cuz I'm fake / Cuz I hate to see somebody so great in that way." And, "Dear 'Pac... We had words cuz the best is supposed to clash at the top / But kept it brotherly when we seen each other and stopped / ...After you left / I got no sleep / Thinking 'bout how us real niggas would be / If we united / A nation of thugs, who could fight it? / ...Will there ever be another MC as nice? / Will you return to us like the resurrection of Christ?"



Hello, Nasty



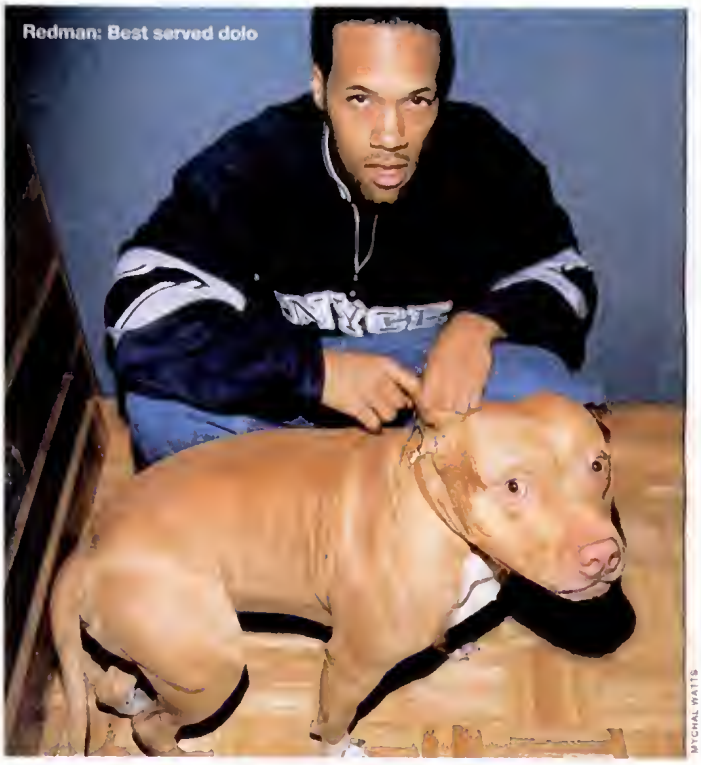
Blackstreet (from left: Riley, Eric Williams, Phillips, Chauncey Hannibal)

ERNIE PANICCIOLI

•Dr. Dre's tentatively titled *Chronic 2000* (*Still Smokin'*), to arrive later in spring on Aftermath/Interscope, will be a compilation-style album, like his classic 1993 *The Chronic* and the not-so-classic 1997 *Dr. Dre Presents... The Aftermath*. But while first-album vets **Snoop Dogg** and the **D.O.C.** are still down, a whole new *Chronic* crew includes young MCs **Eminem** (a.k.a. **Slim Shady**), **Hitman**, and **Time Bomb**.

•While promoting his own current compilation-style album, *Tim's Bio: From the Motion Picture: Life From da Bassment* (Blackground Entertainment), Virginia production-meister Timbaland is also cranking out new material for the upcoming **Ginuwine** album, *100% Ginuwine* (550 Music/Sony), as well as tracks for his rap crew the Supafriends. According to Tim, he's been reformulating his signature sound. The results will show up on *100% Ginuwine*, with songs like first single "What's So Different" as well as "So Anxious" and "Number One Fan."

•Teddy Riley's Blackstreet franchise has changed its lineup *again*. Thirty-something group member **Mark Middleton** has been replaced by the younger **Terrell Phillips**. But the new Blackstreet album, *Get Higher* (Lil' Man/Interscope), due in late February, will hardly suffer. R&B fans can expect more of Blackstreet's standard high-energy harmonizing, streamlined by Riley's electro-orchestral production. A semi–concept album, *Get Higher*'s songs contribute to the story of one couple's relationship, with guest appearances from Lil' Man camp regular **Queen Pen**, rough-riding rapper **Ja Rule**, female MC **Eve of Destruction**, the **Rev. Hezekiah Walker**, and Teddy's new female quartet, **Eighth Ave**. One collaboration that's sure to raise eyebrows is "Drama," on which the indomitable **Mary J.** gets quite contrary!



Redman: Best served dolo

MYCHAL MATTS

REDMAN 'DOC'S DA NAME 2000' DEF JAM

There's no such thing as waxing too poetic about the enduring consistency that is Reggie "Redman" Noble's illustrious rap career: the unparalleled, inimitable rap cadence, the ever-infectious, curse-heavy choruses, and, of course, the beats. Ever since the Brick City Red Baron exploded from the ashes of EPMD's Hit Squad with his classic 1992 debut, *Whut? Thee Album*, Mr. Noble has possessed an incorrigible jones for da funk. Reliably, he continues to bring da noise through most of his fourth solo endeavor, *Doc's da Name 2000*.

You see, in addition to rhymes, the Funk Doctor Spock knows a few things about proverbs like, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." So, true to formula, the new album treats us to requisite cameos from Def Squad coconspirators Erick Sermon and Keith Murray on "Down South Funk" as well as the hilarious fourth installment of the serialized "Soopaman Lova" fable. And, blessedly, the always-welcome pairing of Red with his most compatible partner, Wu hero Method Man, is predictably delightful on the sublime "Well All Rte Cha." Trading rhymes over a shuffling E-Double–produced "4, 3, 2, 1"–style track–hip hop's answer to Jake and Elwood Blues–will no doubt fuel further public demand for a whole damn album of Funk Doc/Johnny Blaze collaborations.

But the true connoisseur knows that Reggie's shit is a platter best served dolo, and what's always saved him from succumbing to the perils of predictability is personality. Where other rappers indulge in lyrical cannibalism far too liberally, Noble's charisma proves to be his saving grace. Witness "Jersey Yo!" 's homage to Ice Cube's "Once Upon a Time in the Projects" or the interlude appropriation of the Beasties' "It's the New Style." Funny as hell, Redman elevates juvenility to new levels of guilty pleasure.

More than just the usual funky party, *Doc's da Name 2000* throws unexpected curves with the "Dangerous"-ly derivative yet enjoyable "Da Goodness," featuring Busta Rhymes, a surprisingly introspective, memory-laden "Da Da DaHHH," and the left-field drum 'n' bass exercise "I Got a Secret" (produced by Roni Size). So while one could ponder the profound existentialism of "I Don't Kare" with lines like, "It's too many MCs, but not enough MCs," it's better to go ape over swell, simian-flavored joints like "Let da Monkey Out" and "I'll Bee Dat!" 's inspirational lyric, "If you gotta be a monkey, be a gorilla." Tony Robbins, grab a banana and give the Doc a call.

Brent Rollins

REVOLUTIONS 2 EVOLUTIONS

A+ 'HEMPSTEAD HIGH'
UNIVERSAL



Making the transition from the innocence of adolescence to the responsibility of adulthood can be difficult for a young artist. And nobody knows that better than 16-year-old A+. He can't decide whether he's a hardcore man or a playful youth on his understated sophomore album, *Hempstead High*.

On the upbeat first single, "Enjoy Yourself," A+ does just that. Atop Ty Fyffe's lighthearted lift of the strings from Walter Murphy's 1976 "Fifth of Beethoven," A+ drops cutesy PG-13 verses: "I don't give a P-H-U-K what you say." But on songs like "Watcha Weigh Me," featuring MJG, the teen gets tougher: "I intend to take no mo' / No blows / Knock 'em out..."

The Long Island teen sounds the most authentic and natural on bouncy Bubble Yum tracks like "Uptop New York," featuring Mr. Cheeks of the Lost Boyz, and "Don't Make Me Wait." These songs remind you of the exuberant A+ we met back in 1996 on his overlooked debut, *The Latch-Key Child*. Unfortunately, A+'s dual personality hampers the cohesiveness of this album, leaving listeners with a fuzzy impression of who he's trying to be and which path he wants to take. But then again, that uncertainty is part of what being a teenager is all about.

Hyun Kim

JUAN ATKINS 'WAX TRAX! MASTERMIX VOLUME 1' WAX TRAX!/TVT

Detroit is the birthplace of two enduring American industries—automobiles and soul music. Therefore, it makes sense that the Afro-techno music known as house was also born there—Detroit's own brand of mechanized assembly line funk. *Wax Trax! MasterMix Volume 1* is a guided tour of this influential sound (the instigator of every errant strain of electronic dance music from Miami bass to drum 'n' bass), created by innovator Juan Atkins. Atkins's name, as well as his aliases, Model 500 and Infiniti, is synonymous with techno. He named the genre and also founded the first techno label, Metroplex.

Mostly embraced by white Europeans, techno rarely gets the props black music does. But Detroit techno delicately balances electronics with soul. As Atkins guides us through a canyon of trance-inducing rumbles and pulses— "The Pace," "Convextion (AA)," "Their Voices"—it's not hard to spot the skeletal remains of a funk warmer and darker than its Continental cousins. Even more revealing is Atkins's 1985 "No UFOs," which posits a futuristic sound rooted as much in Studio 54 favorites the Peech Boys as German electro pioneers Kraftwerk. "Inhibitions" and "Another Dae" represent with jazzy flavor, reminding us that Detroit was an Afronaut boot camp in the days of Parliament/Funkadelic. Altogether, this history lesson is a master session. *Mark Schwartz*

REVOLUTIONS



RICHARD MATHELIER

REVOLUTIONS

BRILLIANT CORNERS

BY K. LEANDER WILLIAMS

It's pretty safe to say that the late Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington's status as an American treasure was not fully recognized until April 29, 1969, when the famed American music pioneer, bandleader, and composer was invited to celebrate his 70th birthday at the Nixon White House. It's not that Ellington, who by that time had been leading his nonpareil orchestra since the mid-'20s, had not been lauded by then. He'd already scored films (1959's *Anatomy of a Murder*, 1961's *Paris Blues*), won Grammys, and been a guest of countless heads of state. But it was at that moment that jazz (and by extension, African-American self-expression) was feted in America for all the world to see, just years after the Pulitzer Prize committee had publicly passed on giving Ellington a special citation—an act which led several members of the committee to resign in protest. (Ellington's quip about the slight: "Fate is being kind to me. Fate doesn't want me to be too famous too young.")

Thirty years later, as what would have been Ellington's 100th birthday approaches on the eve of the start of the 21st century, it now seems commonplace for artists such as Aretha Franklin and Ray Charles to perform before presidents. Even a younger icon like trumpeter Wynton Marsalis—who ironically won a Pulitzer two years ago on the strength of a work that recycles music Ellington introduced decades earlier—is now a semi-regular guest at the White House. But it was Ellington, along with fellow Harlem Renaissance artists such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, who began



The Duke

CO. BETTY DE FRANK DRIGGS COLLECTION.

cementing the idea of an African-American cultural continuum that made such recognition possible. In his autobiography, Ellington opined that "the music of my race is something that is going to live, something which posterity will honor in a higher sense than merely that of the music of the ballroom."

Should it come as a surprise then that Jazz at Lincoln Center, the independent jazz arm of New York's prestigious center for the arts, is doing exactly what the music legend predicted? Starting January of this year artistic director Marsalis and executive director and producer Rob Gibson will throw the full weight of the jazz program's concerts, youth education initiatives, archival film series, and international touring apparatus into a yearlong celebration called "The Ellington Centennial."

Judging from the reception Marsalis and company received when they opened J @ LC's 1998 season with rousing versions of "The Flaming Sword" and "Oclupaca"—his achievements are certainly palpable. Happy 100th, Duke.

FIVE BRILLIANT PICKS (more flavor to check for):

• **Duke Ellington,** *...And His Mother Called Him Bill* (Bluebird/RCA) • **Pharoah Sanders,** *Summun Bukmun Umyun: Deaf Dumb Blind* (Impulse/Universal) • **John Coltrane,** *The Classic Quartet—Complete Impulse Studio Recordings* (Impulse/Universal) • **Various Artists,** *Township Jazz 'N' Jive: 18 South African Urban Swing Classics* (Music Club) • **Tommy Flanagan,** *Sunset and The Mockingbird* (Blue Note)





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VARIOUS ARTISTS 'MUSIC INSPIRED BY THE MOTION PICTURE *DOWN IN THE DELTA*' VIRGIN

Soundtracks are often the domain of bombastic power ballads and tired reworkings of old hits. Fortunately, that isn't the case with this collection of graceful tunes representing the film *Down in the Delta*, a drama starring Alfre Woodard and Wesley Snipes.



In lieu of sappy romantic anthems, this collection features breezy inspirational numbers like Sunday's "Believe in Love" (featuring Whitney Houston) and Janet 's ethereal "God's Stepchild," and blithe celebrations such as D'Angelo's elegantly sensuous remake of the Ohio Players' "Heaven Must Be Like This." Other songs add light jazz accents to smooth contemporary R&B arrangements, and elicit nicely understated vocals from seasoned virtuosos like Luther Vandross and Cassandra Wilson ("I'm Only Human"), Ashford & Simpson ("Uh Uh Ooh Ooh Look Out Here It Comes"), and Chaka Khan (the Artist-penned "Don't Talk 2 Strangers").

For something a little rougher around the edges, there's "My Soul Don't Dream," a hearty, bluesy duet featuring Me'Shell Ndegéocello and Keb' Mo', or "Patchwork Quilt," a typically warm, vibrant a cappella performance by Sweet Honey in the Rock. Granted, none of these tracks hold the commercial promise of, say, *The Bodyguard*'s "I Will Always Love You" (Arista, 1992) or *Titanic*'s "My Heart Will Go On" (Sony, 1997), but then none are as likely to end up as fodder for prom and wedding bands either. *Elysa Gardner*

DEFARI 'FOCUSED DAILY' TOMMY BOY

REVOLUTIONS REVOLUTIONS

When Defari tells a wack MC to "go back to school and learn some concepts / And grammar" in "Killin' Spree" from his debut album, *Focused Daily*, he's not making a request, he's giving an assignment—after all, it's his job. This history teacher at Los Angeles' Inglewood High generated a strong buzz with his underground singles "Bionic" and "People's Choice" (ABB Records, 1997). Now he's graduated to an institution of higher earning—the major-label deal.

As the newest member of the Likwit Crew (King-T, Tha Alkaholiks, and Xzibit), Defari continues his fam's legacy of no-frills, just-skills projects.


MICHAEL MILLER

With his rugged flow atop staggered piano chords, crisp snares, and a thick bass kick, the album's first single, "Never Lose Touch," exemplifies Defari's simple yet sophisticated approach. Tossing in references to his mother as well as the importance of staying focused, Defari comes off positive without being preachy.

While the album is a bit on the long side, standouts like the lush, string-laden ode to his hometown, "Lowlands Anthem Pt.1," and the crashing crew cut, "Thunder & Lightning" (featuring Xzibit & Tha Alkaholiks' Tash), solidify Defari (which means "of the Pharoah" in Egyptian) Herut's initiation into hip hop's honor society—not bad for a freshman. *H.K.*

REVOLUTIONS SOUTHLOVER

BOOM SHOTS

BY ROB KENNER

Q: *Did you imagine stardom would be like this?*

A: *I'm just the Warrlord. I'm not a star, but I shot down plenty star from the sky.*

Tucked into a hotel bed in Connecticut, **Bounty Killer** is getting ready for the war. His show clothes—a selection of leather pants, silk shirts, and designer shades—are laid out inside a big black suitcase. His audience—expatriate Jamaicans, hip hop hard rocks, guerrilla warfare enthusiasts—are out there, somewhere, preparing for the big bashment. It's been a long time since the Warrlord came to town.

Two years, to be exact, during which Bounty took what he calls his "spring break." After the remarkable album *My Xperience* (Blunt/VP/TVT, 1996), a bonanza of blistering reggae jams and rap duets, Bounty simply dropped out of sight. "We went on a little tour, then me just cool," he explains. "I wanted to see if I still had my spot," he says, "or if I was just living on borrowed time."

The Killer has returned with *two* new albums on the Blunt/TVT label. First came *Next Millennium*, a crossover-minded offering that includes a Refugee Camp–produced romp ("It's a Party," featuring Da Cocoa Brovaz, Nona Hendryx, and Free), grimy collaborations with Mobb Deep and Noreaga, and don't-call-it-a-comeback smashes "Eagle & Di Hawk" and "Can't Believe Mi Eyes." On deck is *Fifth Element*, a straight-up ragga album aimed at Bounty's die-hard followers.

Since he first surfaced in 1992—pulverizing dancehalls with meticulously constructed wicked-man anthems like "Coppershot," "Lodge," and "Spy fi Die"—Bounty Killer has forged an enormous rep out of nothing more than a big voice, a way with words, and a lifetime of hard knocks. Born on the edge of a garbage dump in Riverton City, Jamaica, Rodney Price and his seven siblings earned their bread however they could—stealing sugarcane, gathering scrap metal, selling wall plaques his mother embroidered with inspirational phrases like, THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND SALVATION. "I always had obstacles in my way," he says, "so that's how I think, Defend my bread. Some people's bread is put down for them, but I always find my bread in desolate places."



The Warrlord

BET flickers on the hotel TV, mutely blaring rap-star antics. A medium-size spliff smolders in an ashtray on the bedside table. Bounty lies on top of the turned-down bed, his eyes fixed on a handheld computer, his right hand stabbing at the liquid crystal display as he plays a joyless game of solitaire. "I love it when they underrate me," he says. "When they treat me as a dunce or an idiot. In Jamaica, they idolize me. But I love coming to America and going to the back of the line. It keeps me more on point, more rugged and ragga rough."

Hours later he takes the stage and tears the place up. His voice flips from a belly-bottom boom to a shrill shriek as he delivers the final blow: "Me name Warrlord / From up a war yard / Nuff fools try hard / *Well they shall die hard...*"

FIVE BOOMING PICKS (more flavor to check for):

• **Baaba Maal** *Nomad Soul* (Palm Pictures) • **Ras Shiloh** *Babylon You Doom* (Shiloh B) • **The Mystic Revealers** *Crossing the Atlantic* (Mystic Reggae Sounds) • **Sizzla** *Freedom Cry* (Xterminator/VP) • **Michael Rose** *Party in Session—Live* (Heartbeat)

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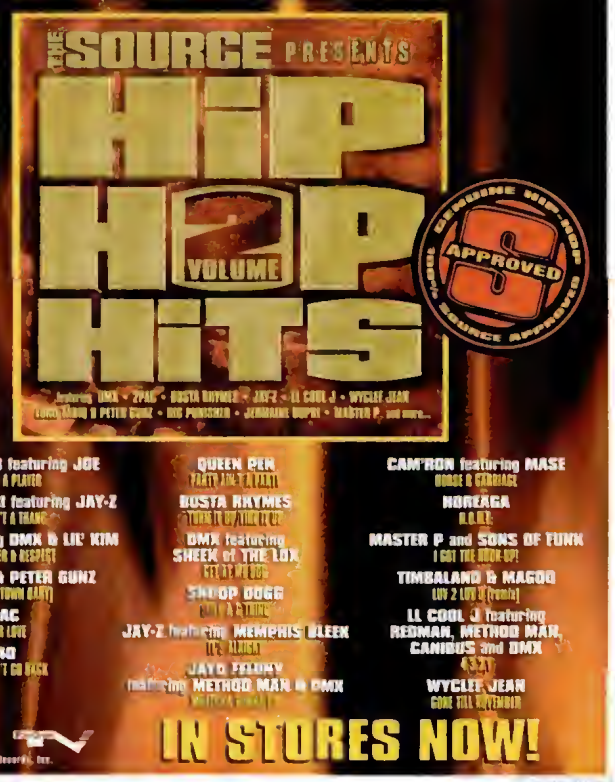


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REVOLUTIONS SOUTHLOVE

CHECK THE RÉSUMÉ

DISCOGRAPHY: DIANE WARREN



For the past 15 years, Grammy-winning songwriter Diane Warren has been topping the charts with emotion-laden jams of love. Pop, rock, Latin, R&B, country—pick a genre. Warren has worked Top Ten magic for everyone from Gloria Estefan to Meat Loaf to LeAnn Rimes to Aaliyah. In 1998 alone, Warren's amorous ballads scored for Aerosmith, Boyz II Men, Xscape, Brandy, Dru Hill, and Mya. And this year, the crazysexycool women of TLC will receive her tender treatment. But for someone who can tell the heart's tales so well, Warren herself is surprisingly unfamiliar with the power of love. "I don't know if I've ever been in love with a *person*," she says from her office on Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard. "Like, [to the point where] I'd do *anything*. But for my music, I'd do anything." With her music as her main squeeze, it sure seems like Ms. Warren can do whatever she wants to. Here's just a sampling of her extensive hit list.

Mykella Van Cooten

"Solitaire" Laura Branigan (Atlantic, 1983)
"Rhythm of the Night" DeBarge (Motown, 1985)
"I Get Weak" Belinda Carlisle (MCA, 1987)
"Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" Starship (RCA, 1987)
"Give a Little Love" Aswad (Mango/Island, 1988)
"Look Away" Chicago (Reprise, 1988)
"When I See You Smile" Bad English (Epic, 1989)
"When I'm Back on My Feet Again" Michael Bolton (Columbia, 1989)
"Blame It on the Rain" Milli Vanilli (Arista, 1989)
"If I Could Turn Back Time" Cher (Geffen, 1989)
"If You Asked Me To" Patti LaBelle (MCA, 1989), Celine Dion (Epic, 1992)
"Love Will Lead You Back" Taylor Dayne (Arista, 1989)
"When the Night Comes" Joe Cocker (Capitol, 1989)
"Take It to Heart" Michael McDonald (Reprise, 1990)
"Missing You Now" Michael Bolton (Columbia, 1991)
"Live for Loving You" Gloria Estefan (Epic, 1991)
"Set the Night to Music" Starship (RCA, 1987), Roberta Flack and Maxi Priest (Atlantic, 1991)
"Nothing Broken but My Heart" Celine Dion (Epic, 1992)
"Mi Primer Amor" Chayanne (Sony Discos, 1992)
"Don't Turn Around" Ace of Base (Arista, 1993)
"I'll Never Get Over You Getting Over Me" Exposé (Arista, 1992)
"I Will Be Here for You" Michael W. Smith (Reunion, 1992)
"Saving Forever for You" Shanice (Motown, 1992)
"Don't Take Away My Heaven" Aaron Neville (A&M, 1993)
"I'd Lie for You (And That's the Truth)" Meat Loaf (MCA, 1995)
"Because You Loved Me" Celine Dion (550 Music/Epic, 1996)
"I Turn to You" All-4-One (Atlantic, 1996)
"Reach" Gloria Estefan (Epic, 1996)
"Un-Break My Heart" Toni Braxton (LaFace, 1996)
"You Were Loved" Whitney Houston (Arista, 1996)
"How Do I Live" LeAnn Rimes (Curb, 1997), Trisha Yearwood (MCA, 1997)
"The One I Gave My Heart To" Aaliyah (Atlantic, 1996)
"A Smile Like Yours" Natalie Cole (Elektra, 1997)
"The Arms of the One Who Loves You" Xscape (Columbia, 1998)
"Just to Hear You Say That You Love Me" Faith Hill (Warner Bros., 1998)
"I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" Aerosmith (Columbia, 1998)
"For You I Will" Monica (Warner Bros., 1998)

III FRUM THA SOUL '111 FRUM THA SOUL' RCA



So-called mack daddies beware: The revolution against you is advancing. Increasingly, young male R&B artists are becoming galvanized by the cavalier-to-misogynistic messages put forth by some of their hip hop peers, and are singing on behalf of the ladies.

III Frum tha Soul consists of three such upstarts. Like the men who clearly inspired them—Teddy Pendergrass, Isaac Hayes, the Artist, Babyface—Big Jim, G-Child, and Rico understand that the *surest* way to seduce a woman is with respect. Thus on their self-titled debut, they lend their sultry, precociously burnished voices to elegant endorsements of romance and chivalry, like the sinuous, synth-laced "Treat You Right" and the acoustic guitar–kissed "That Ain't No Way."

Of course, for all their gentle manners, these III are vulnerable to strong hormonal urges. Their singing and rapping on the lithely funky "Come On" is rife with carnal longing, and the condition alluded to on the Philly soul–inspired "Fever" ain't the flu. But even when slyly sweet-talking an ex-girlfriend on the slow-grooving "Break Me Off a Piece," they sound so darned polite and earnest. Come to think of it, these guys just may be as dangerous as the playas. *E.G.*

DR. ISRAEL 'INNA CITY PRESSURE' MUTANT SOUND SYSTEM

While U.K. junglists and dub technicians recently have been releasing double albums left and right, the Great American Drum 'n' Bass Opus has been but a dream. Crooklyn, N.Y.'s Dr. Israel closes the gap with the most fully realized statement from the underground massive in quite some time. *Inna City Pressure* finds the globe-trotting dreadlocked Doc laying down serious roots—from "New York, L.A., back to Kingston" as he chats 'pon "Coppers (Brooklyn Version)," a raucous collaboration with Rancid. A fixture on the roving experimental dub scene in Brooklyn, San Francisco, Berlin, and London, Dr. Israel effortlessly segues from hip hop to jungle, dub to punk with a polyglot post-rock enthusiasm that's uniquely American.



But *Inna City Pressure* is no star-spangled block party. Conscious tracks like "Life in the Ghetto," "Pressure," and "Israel" gild premillennial tension with Rasta reasoning. "There will be no resolution 'til I'm called African," the Doc drops atop a cowbell riddim on "Time." Equally current are the junglist revisiting of the Clash's "Armagideon Time" and the slamming Black Sabbath cover, "The Doctor Vs. the Wizard." With strong songs to match his devious production, Dr. Israel avoids the pretentious ambient tendencies of the Crooklyn dub confederacy. Look to this dread to put the underground over in '99. *M. S.*

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T-Nasty, Mr. Fatal, and Jiggie

DEAN KARR

NO GOOD-N-JIGGIE 'LIZARD-LIZARD' LUKE/LOUD

It's really hard to critique a booty group like No Good-N-Jiggie. There's no demarcation to clearly distinguish the mediocre from the superb. After all, this is music made to entice men to stuff their hard-earned dollars into the G-strings of gyrating go-go girls. As long as there's a beat to bounce to, no one really raises a stink.

With that said, Luke's new group meet their goal. The majority of the 18-track disc will surpass the expectations of the most ardent booty-club patron. "Head/Hey," "My Bad (featuring Luke)," and the ubiquitous "Lizard-Lizard" (based on the Taco Bell Chihuahua's *Godzilla* shout-out) motivate the crowd with call-and-response hooks. First made famous on Luke's classic 1992 "I Wanna Rock," these you-say-hey-I-say-ho hooks are the backbone of bass/booty music.

Lizard-Lizard does contain one surprise. Southern spiritualists Goodie MOb drop in from ATL to appear on "Dirty Bottom," a premillennial upgrade of their '95 classic "Dirty South" (LaFace). While the concept is clever, the effort falls short as Goodie's insightful lyrics get lost behind an unimpressive T-Mo–produced track. But the objective of *Lizard-Lizard* is to stimulate butts, not minds. And on that, they come up big. *Mahmoud Adbul-Lateef*

SCARAMANGA 'SCARAMANGA' FAT BEATS/SUN LARGE



COURTESY OF RAWKUS

REVOLUTIONS REVOLUTIONS

Damn that *Dr. Octagon*. Fans of that left-field Kool Keith–helmed project may remember the loquacious lyricism of the good doctor's chief intern, Sir Menelik, who recited speed-freak rhymes over tracks of bass-filled cosmic slop. Appearing briefly as Cyclops 4000 on indie powerhouse Rawkus, Menelik has yet another moniker—Scaramanga—and now offers patients a glimpse of what operations this hyper New York lyrical surgeon can perform without his Kool collaborator.

In support of Scaramanga's verbal confetti, producers Scholar Wise, Showbiz, Goldfinghaz of Wu-Elements, and Scaramanga hisowndamnself, do a credible job of communicating unorthodox sounds to the ears of the uninitiated. Lyrical sweet teeth are cavity-bound on "Sugar 99," whose xylophone track (recalling Cypress Hill's 1995 "Illusions") provides a contemplative backdrop to free-associative, iced-down bodega poetics like, "I dead it / Thoughts mad kinetic / When I edit / Then let it triple value / My shit'll have you / Flippin' / A-K clippin'."

The LP even manages to cover less outwardly out-there territory with the Raekwon-influenced "Holdin' New Cards," the satirical "Strip Club Bait," and "Special EFX," featuring a strong appearance from fellow former Kool Keith associate Godfather Don. Scaramanga's toonage may be written off as, in the words of Mobb Deep, some "space shit that don't make no sense." But for those who can't get enough of that abstract stuff—to paraphrase the infamous words of Sun Ra—space is still the place. *B.R.*

CHAIRMAN'S CHOICE

REVOLUTIONS SOULOVER

BY CHAIRMAN MAO

Flatbush, Brooklyn's **J-Treds** is probably best known as a member of underground supertroupe the Indelible MC's (along with El-P and Big Juss of Company Flow and Breeze of the Juggaknots). Over the past few years, the 10th-letter technician has expanded fans' audial canals on revered hip hop experiments like Co Flo's sitar-crazy "The Fire in Which You Burn" (Rawkus, 1997). Going solo with "Make It Happen" (Fondle 'Em/Fat Beats, 212-965-1862), J warms our ears with toasty piano phrases on the A-side and rips quips like, "I leave more heads touched than Ash Wednesday," on the more aggressive flip, "Praise Due."

Further along Alphabet Street, Uptown's 12th-letter terror, **Big L**, displays his legendary talent for spitting catchy quips on "Ebonics (Criminal Slang)" (Flamboyant Entertainment/Fat Beats)—an endlessly quotable glossary of ghetto terminology spun over sharp orchestral stabs. "If you caught a felony, you caught a 'F' / If you got killed, you 'got left' / And if you got 'the dragon,' you got bad breath," L explains with fire in his lungs. Put it on, Big fella!

Philadelphia expatriates **The High & Mighty** may now reside in Nueva York, but the duo's debut, *Home Field Advantage* (Eastern Conference, 212-946-5560), will invariably find a home within the hearts of underground rap fans of various zip codes. Rife with bawdy sex styles and odes to masturbation ("Dick Starbuck: Porno Detective"; "Hands on Experience Pt. II"), *Home* provides well-executed frat-B-boy mischief for those weaned on *Critical Beatdown* as well as *Licensed to Ill*. Mr. Eon's slurred speech and DJ Mighty Mi's beats also excel when espousing purist hip hop musings, as on the majestic, previously available single "The Meaning" and the buzz-toned "B-Boy Document," with Mos Def, Mike Zoot, and El-P.


Joey, baby: Chavez chills

After toiling in major-label limbo for a couple of years, Philly Rufthouse survivors **Mountain Brothers** have self-released their much-anticipated debut long player, *Self, Volume I* (Pimpstrut Records, 215-662-5614). The Mountain Brothers [illegible] **-esque sense of humor on "Days of Being Dumb,"** but the strength of sparkling creations like "Galaxies: The Next Level," "Paperchase," and "Things to Do" is found in sample-free, jazzyfatnastee Fender Rhodes chords and ebullient wordplay more reminiscent of fellow Illadelph ambassadors the Roots. As production guru Chops rhymes on "Fluids," "It's the three Asian-American bros / With the focus on killing biases like overdoses / So just step like aerobics courses."

Twenty-three-year-old L.A. producer **Joey Chavez** steps to the boards with veteran precision on his three-song debut, *After the Heat* (ABB Records, 510-419-0396). Enlisting vocal and turntable assistance from an impressive potpourri of subterranean Cali all-stars (Evidence and Iriscience of Dilated Peoples, Tommy Boy signee Defari, and DJs Babu and Revolution), pal Joey exhibits his knack for capturing an array of moods. He dissects precision horn and guitar licks on "Reservation for One," simmers a bitches brew of tense piano chords on "Develop Tools," and harnesses ethereal vibes for "The Chills." "Raisin' levels of expectancy / Yeah, your shit is tight / You think it's ABB quality!" declares label mate Evidence on "Reservation." Now watch Joey do his thing.

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20 QUESTIONS

1. Isn't Kirk Franklin's *The Nu Nation Project* (Gospo Centric) hotter than a packed church in August?



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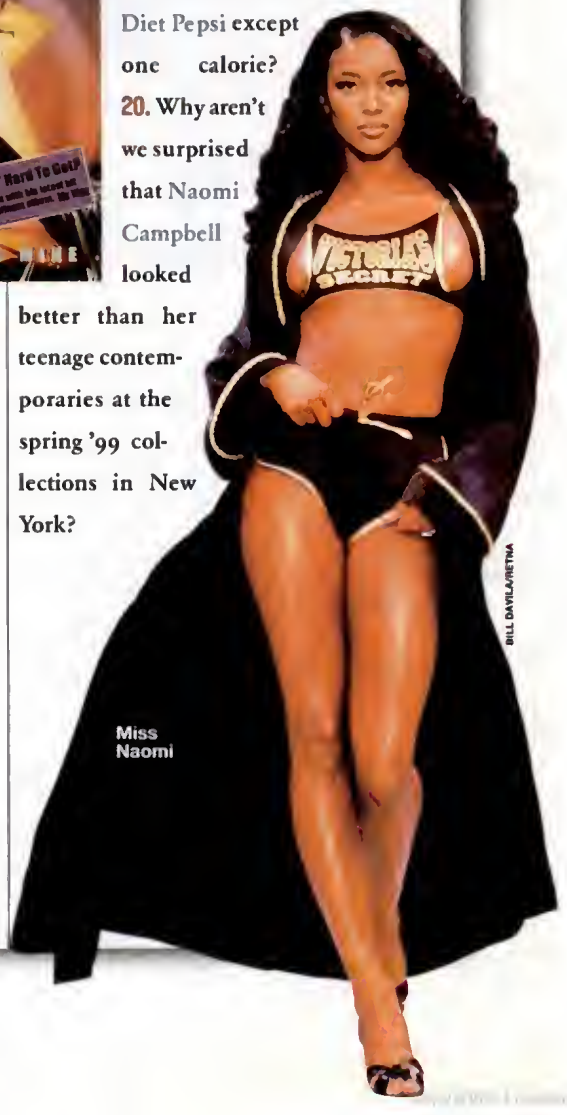
2. Don't you have newfound respect for George Michael after he dressed up in a policeman's uniform and danced around a public bathroom in his video for "Outside"? **3.** And isn't his two-CD set, *Ladies & Gentlemen: The Best of George Michael* (Epic), *amazing*? **4.** Word is, WNBA player Pamela McGee temporarily lost custody of her daughter because a judge thought that being a baller interfered with parenting, but don't you think his decision would've been different if Pamela were an NBA player named Michael or Karl? **5.** Are we the only ones glad that *The Jeffersons* are movin' on back to TV, even if only to Nick at Nite, starting January 25? **6.** We hear that Aaron Spelling's son, Randy, is trying to be a rapper, so shouldn't he and *90210*'s Brian Austin Green hook up to form White Star? **7.** Is the air in Woody Harrelson's new oxygen bar ganja scented? **8.** Couldn't we *all* use Nita Tucker's new book, *How Not to Screw It Up: 10 Steps to an Extraordinary Relationship* (Three Rivers Press)? **9.** Don't you agree that if science fiction had a queen writer, she'd be Octavia Butler? **10.** Isn't OutKast's *Aquemini* (LaFace) the best synth record since Yaz's 1982 *Upstairs at Eric's* (Sire)? **11.** Is Usher wearing a condom on his head in the photo for his new single, "One Day You'll Be Mine" (LaFace)? **12.** Even though they stupidly forgot 1983's "Is This the End?," (Streetwise) why are we *living* for New Edition's new collection of slow jams, *Lost in Love* (MCA)? **13.** Was the movie *Pleasantville* (New Line) so pleasant because there was not one black face in town? **14.** Why does Foxy Brown suddenly sound *exactly* like Lil' Kim? **15.** Don't the new ads for Rap-A-Lot Records look like No Limit's—but on a Kinko's budget? **16.** Are Madonna and Alanis Morissette sharing the same stylist? **17.** We love the new R. Kelly album, but don't front, isn't it just 29 versions of the same song? **18.** And couldn't that song be called "I Believe I Can't Sleep When I Stroke You Up and Then Ghett-Out on the Down Low"? **19.** So what exactly is the difference between Pepsi One and Diet Pepsi except one calorie? **20.** Why aren't we surprised that Naomi Campbell looked better than her teenage contemporaries at the spring '99 collections in New York?







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THE DETAILS

VIBEFashion: "Activate"

page 104: Ivory cotton, polyester, and acetate zip-front convertible jacket $505 by **New York Industrie** available at Camouflage, N.Y.C., Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C., and Barneys New York, N.Y.C.; sunglasses by **Blind**; charcoal cotton and nylon pullover jacket with Velcro closures $335 by **Cerruti Arte** available at Allure, Philadelphia, Tyrone, Roslyn, N.Y.C., and Prophet, Chicago; camera by **Olympus Stylus Epic DLX.**

page 105: White long-sleeve wool and cotton T-shirt with red and white stripes $160 and navy polyamide ripstop pant $275, both by **Byblos** available at Traffic, L.A., and Untitled, N.Y.C.; aqua socks by **Nike**; navy cotton hooded sweater $135 and white cotton poplin torrence flight pant $165, both by **Polo Ralph Lauren** available at Polo Ralph Lauren and select department stores nationwide; aqua socks by **Nike.**

page 106: Navy cotton double-knit jacket $310, navy cotton twill pant $195, and shoes, all by **Calvin Klein** available at Calvin Klein, N.Y.C.; navy rayon hooded zip-front jacket $575 and navy rayon sweat pants $250, both by **Emporio Armani** available at Emporio Armani stores N.Y.C., Boston, and Costa Mesa, L.A.

page 107: White sheer cotton and silk boatneck sweater and green cotton rollneck sweater, both by **Calvin Klein.**

page 108: White cotton and resin hooded zip-front polo tunic $330, beige cotton and silk pant $343, and boots, all by **CoSTUME NATIONAL HOMME** available at CoSTUME NATIONAL, N.Y.C., Barneys New York, N.Y. and L.A., and Saks Fifth Avenue N.Y.C. and San Francisco; pebble rubberized hooded jacket $298 by **DKNY** available at DKNY, Las Vegas and L.A., and Saks Fifth Avenue stores nationwide; pebble drawstring pant $68 by **DKNY** available at Saks Fifth Avenue stores nationwide and Louis of Boston, Boston; shoes by **Rockport.**

page 109: Charcoal gray hooded rubberized linen jacket $400 and black rubberized linen pant $230, both by **Nicole Farhi** available at select Saks Fifth Avenue stores nationwide; black nylon and polyester zip-front hooded jacket $479, black viscose, wool, and nylon short $264, and boots, all by **CoSTUME NATIONAL HOMME** available at CoSTUME NATIONAL, N.Y.C., Barneys New York, N.Y.C., and Saks Fifth Avenue N.Y.C. and San Francisco; vintage binoculars.

page 110: Gray high-collar rubberized linen jacket $350, white cotton sleeveless T-shirt $80, and white rubberized linen pant $230, all by **Nicole Farhi** available at select Saks Fifth Avenue stores nationwide; gray polypropalene boatneck sweater $235 by **Richard Edwards** (for more information, please call 212-334-4280); charcoal coated cotton-blend hooded jacket with drawstrings $385 and light gray cotton canvas twill knee length flat-front shorts $140, both by **Richard Edwards** available at Bloomingdale's, N.Y.C., L.A., and Miami; shoes by **Nicole Farhi.**

page 111: Black hooded nylon zip-front pullover $198 by **DKNY** available DKNY, Las Vegas and L.A., and Macy's East; white V-neck T-shirt $24 by **DKNY** available at Macy's East and Rich's nationwide.

VIBEStyle: "Don't Sleep"

page 112: Jade floral-print nylon tank top $18, jade floral-print nylon boxer shorts $18, jade polyrib tank top $13, and jade polyrib u-kini $7, all by **GUESS? Underwear** available at Dillard's and McCraes stores nationwide (for more information, please call 800-39-GUESS); blue and white long-sleeve cotton flannel shirt $29 by **cK Underwear** available Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Burdines stores nationwide; black and blue plaid cotton pajama pant $28 by **Nautica** available at select department stores nationwide; wine tapestry crushed-velvet tank top $18 and boxer shorts $18, both by **GUESS? Underwear** available at select Nordstom stores (for more information, please call 800-39-GUESS); red silk wrap three-quarter-length robe $78 by **Victoria's Secret** available at Victoria's Secret stores nationwide; red cotton jersey sleeveless T-shirt $13 by **Champion** available at select sporting good stores nationwide; red cotton terrycloth hooded robe $125 by **FUBU** available at Macy's, Rich's , and Burdines stores nationwide; red Yankee hat by 5950; teddy bear by **Best Friends**; red and blue striped cotton robe $49.50 by **Tommy Hilfiger** available at select Macy's and Dillards stores nationwide; fuchsia polyester slip dress $38 by **Victoria's Secret** available at Victoria's Secret stores nationwide; black cotton robe with blue hood $85 by **Nautica** available at Macy's West and Lord & Taylor stores nationwide; silver stretch polyester lace demi bra $28 by **Victoria's Secret** available at Victoria's Secret stores nationwide; charcoal gray cotton poplin drawstring pajama pant $24 by **The GAP** available at select GAP stores nationwide; white cotton jersey sleeveless T-shirt by **Champion**; black and blue cotton plaid pajama pant $28 by **Nautica** available at select department stores nationwide; bucket hat by **555 SOUL**; fuchsia and black nylon chemise $32 each, both by **Joe Boxer** (for more information, please call 800-JOE-BOXER).

VIBEStyle: "Super Thugs"

page 114: Black and gray nylon jersey by **Majestic**; black and white cotton thermal loungewear shorts $34 by **FUBU** available at Macy's stores nationwide; sneakers by **Nike**; hat by **PNB Nation.**

page 115: Royal blue cotton condom-pocket boxer shorts $20 by **Malone Sport** available at Emperial Sport, Chicago, Dr. Jay's, N.Y.C., and Mr. Rags, L.A.; socks by **Champion**; sneakers by **Adidas.**

page 116: Blue plaid cotton campshirt $32 and pajama shorts $25, both by **Ralph Lauren Underwear** available at Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Lord & Taylor stores nationwide; navy cotton stretch boxers $25 by **Tommy Hilfiger** available at Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Dillards stores nationwide.

page 117: Red cotton boxer shorts and red silk boxer shorts both by **Naughty Gear** (for more information, please call 201-642-3910).

The Stylist: Joe Boxer

page 118: White cotton boxer shorts with Red Devils $15 by **Joe Boxer** (for more information, please call 800-JOE-BOXER).

page 119: Yellow cotton stretch boxer shorts with Smiley Face $17 by **Joe Boxer** (for more information, please call 800-JOE-BOXER).

Gear: Sneak Peek

page 120: 1). Speed Racer $69.99 by **Reebok** (for more information, please call 800-648-5550); 2). DRAVA $69.95 by **Fila** (for more information, please call 800-PRO-FILA); 3). Air Max 120 $110 by **Nike** (for more information, please call 800-344-NIKE); 4). Watershoe $64.99 by **Adidas** (for more information, 800-448-1796); 5). Air Zoom Seismic $115 by **Nike** (for more information, please call 800-344-NIKE); 6). All-Terrain $58.50 by **New Balance** (for more information, please call 800-253-SHOE).

VIBEFace: "Arresting Beauty"

page 122: Navy silk asymmetrical slip dress $203 by **La Perla** available at La Perla, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 212-459-2775).

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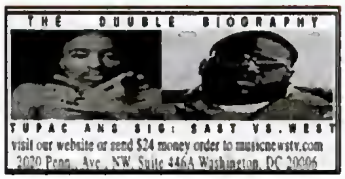
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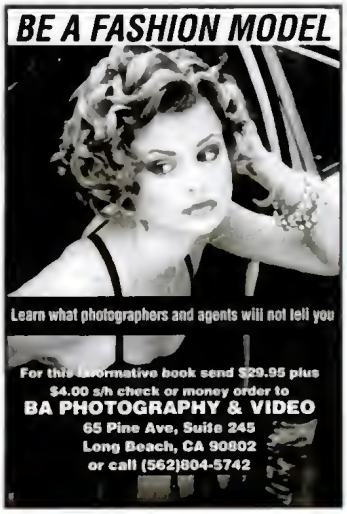
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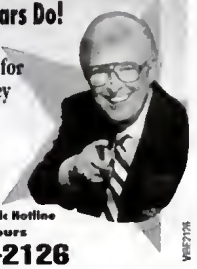
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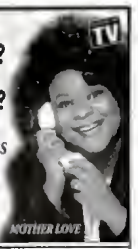
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ESTHER ROLLE

November 8, 1920–November 17, 1998

Damn. Damn. *Damn!* Those of us reared on '70s reruns will always love stage and screen actress Esther Rolle for shocking America with this (at that time) uncharacteristic bit of prime-time profanity. Today, we jokingly repeat it—"damn, damn, damn"—when things go wrong. But back in '76, during the height of *Good Times*' (CBS, 1974–79) run, the outburst was serious. Rolle had worked her character, Florida Evans, into a deeply affecting conundrum of passion and pain. Her TV husband James (John Amos) had died, turning the Chicago family's project household into a one-parent statistic.

For an unenlightened few, Rolle will forever remain that impoverished maid—be it as *Maude*'s cynical servant, the Evans family's strong-willed wife and mother, *A Raisin in the Sun*'s commanding matron, or the dutiful housekeeper from *Driving Miss Daisy* (Warner Bros., 1989). But we know that Rolle was much more than the domestics she portrayed. When she died this past fall, at the age of 78, the Emmy-winning actress was a renowned race-relations advocate. The first woman inducted into the NAACP Image Awards Hall of Fame in 1987, the Pompano Beach, Fla., native fought against stereotyping of blacks on TV. Back when Rolle was still relatively unknown, she refused to accept the *Good Times* gig unless her character was a married woman whose husband lived *with* the family. "In the beginning, I loved the series," she told the *Washington Post* in 1986. "It was a thing of worth—the first time you saw a black family on TV, husband included." Though Rolle temporarily left the show in 1977—disgusted with writers who turned Florida's eldest son, J.J., into a "Dy-no-mite!"-shouting buffoon—her work prepped American viewers for a slew of black sitcom successes like NBC's *The Cosby Show* (1984–1992) and this season's *The Hughleys* (ABC).

Sadly, Rolle's passing comes just as her star was rising again. In 1997 she costarred in John Singleton's racially explosive drama, *Rosewood* (Warner Bros.), but she didn't live to see the release of her last film, the Maya Angelou–directed *Down in the Delta* (Miramax). For that—for her passing, for our loss, and for the good times—we find ourselves saying, *Damn.*

Rochell Thomas

CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE


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